

CHRONICLES

MERCURY

PLANET SOURCEBOOK



FROM DREAM POD 9



JOVIAN

CHRONICLES





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► DREAM POD 9

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INTRODUCTION

P Ψ Ô Ȯ 2 5 ⊕ ♀ ♂



"I love Mercury. I love it so much, I'm glad I'm never there."

— Longshore's Lead Sherry Dolenc, Cargo Officer

HEAT ◀

It was too hot to sleep.

The ship's main environmental controls kicked out about two hours ago, and though the backups were keeping us alive, it still felt like the freighter had been turned into a half-kilometer long Dutch oven. I had thought that if I came up to the lounge, stared into the icy depths of space, at least I'd feel cooler. Of course, I was kidding myself. It really didn't matter where I stood — taking a breath was like inhaling a fistful of smoldering cotton.

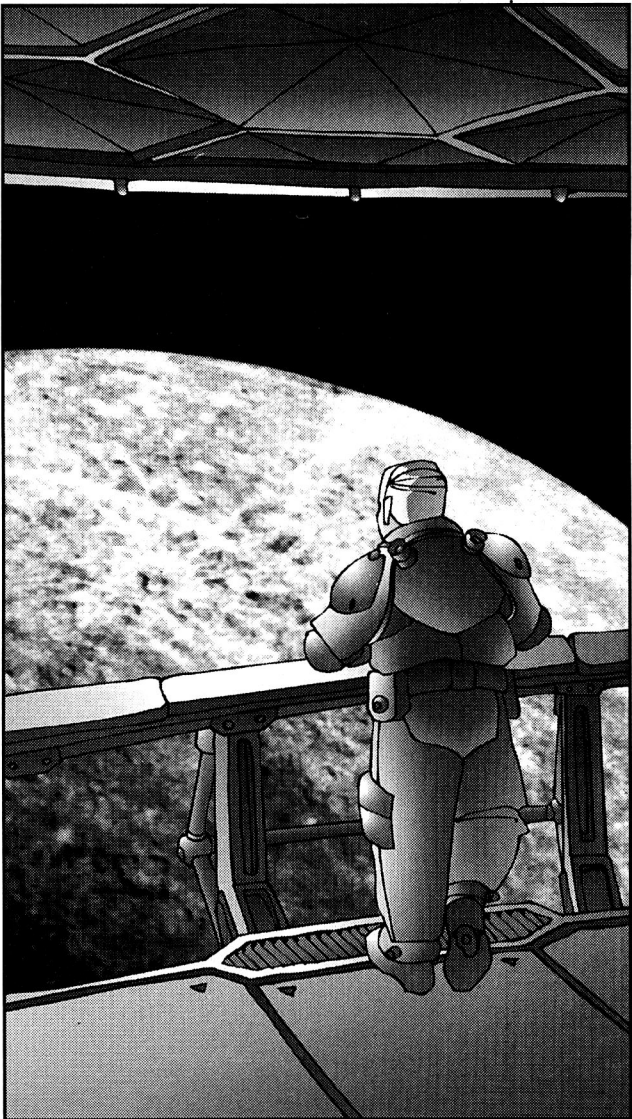
Even though I subscribe to the national nightmare of being roasted alive, the environmental problems didn't bother me. This ship makes a regular Mercury run. It was built to take the heat. In a little less than six hours, it'll sail into Mercury's shadow, and things'll cool off plenty. Probably too much, if they don't get the machinery fixed. Then again, I prefer the cold. No, the real trouble will come from somewhere else.

See, this kind of heat, it makes people crazy. It slowly melts away the veneer of politeness, evaporates any pretense of civilized behavior. It puts the average Joe or Jane on a slow burn, and that's bad enough in this overcrowded metal matchbox. But somewhere out there, someone's going to spark up like a flare and turn everything in the immediate vicinity into a private little inferno. I know this first hand, because it's my job to talk people through the fire. Counsel them back into a cooler state of mind. I haven't had to do it too often; this is a good crew, and if there are any problems it only ever concerns one or two of them at a time. But this is different. This heat affects everyone at once, and if I go around now and try to keep things cool, I'll probably only wind up fanning whatever may already be smoldering. I can't do a damn thing until something happens. I'd say it's only a matter of time, but the sudden tingling of my wristcom tells me I don't even have that luxury. I tap the Accept Call button, and a thin, frantic voice claws its way into the air.

"Code twenty-one sixteen. Grid one-one-five. We've got a situation, and it's pretty bad."

"Always is," I answer. It's time to go to work.

- Master Officer John Boterman, Ship's Counselor.



BOOK CONTENT ▼

Chapter 1, *Introduction*, provides a history of colonized Mercury as well as presenting an introduction to some of the physical aspects of the solar system's innermost planet. Chapter 2, *Mercury Overview*, explores the culture and society of those who live both on and above the 'hell planet.' Local organizations, including law enforcement and the military, are covered in some detail. Chapter 3, *The Merchant Guild*, delves into the secrets of one of the most aloof organizations in the Solar System.

Chapter 4, *Living Space*, outlines Mercurian settlements both in orbit and under the planet's surface. Five specific locations are more intricately detailed: two Vivarium colonies, two subterranean habitats and one trade station orbiting Mars. Chapter 5, *Gamemaster's Resources*, details Mercury-specific character creation and provides tips on adventures as well as a fistful of Non-Player Characters. Chapter 6, *Technology*, concludes the sourcebook with notes about Mercurian knowledge and expertise. It also includes a selection of personal equipment and unique Mercurian vessels.

end of section 1.1 heat

► AGES PAST

1.2

The tale of humanity's existence on the Sun's closest planet is ultimately one of triumph, and is filled with an abundance of heroes and heroines. This history, however, is a very basic representation, and many of the names Mercurians know by heart, such as Kerrin Momersteeg, Ulys Van Dorp and the Siertsema brothers, have been removed from this summary because of space considerations. It is vital to remember, though, that behind each event there are many people whose names should never be forgotten.

▼ THE COURSE TO THE MESSENGER (1957-2034)

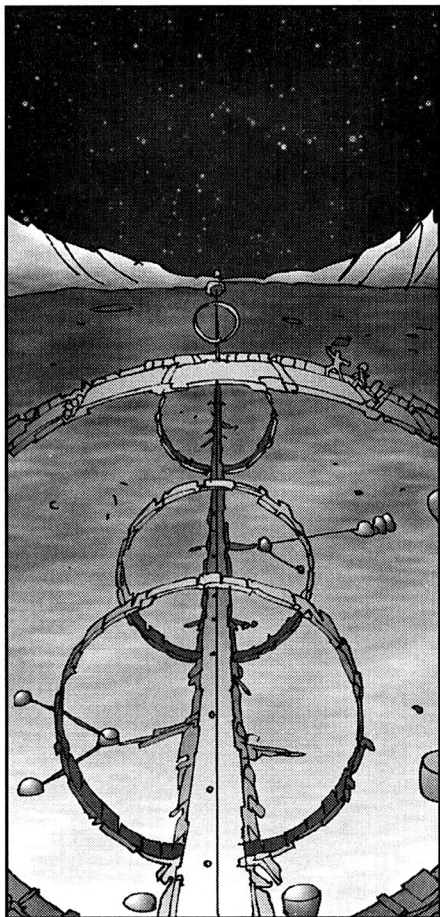
1.2.1

When the space race started in the mid-twentieth century, Mercury was not even a point on the track. Mariner 10 was the only terrestrial visitor to Mercury during the first fifty years of space exploration. Little was known about the planet — over half the surface was unmapped — until the much-delayed NASA probe Messenger arrived in 2013. Although this mission was the single largest historical source of data, plans for further exploration were minimal, and consisted mainly of more robotic probes.

Commercial interests were far more ambitious. In early 2030, with mining operations in the Asteroid Belt, a base on the Moon and permanent colonies under construction in Earth orbit, a manned base on Mercury was no longer a far-fetched idea. Corporations and national governments alike had received a taste of the wealth of the Belt, and the mineral-rich surface of the innermost planet was very alluring. More than thirty companies and corporations provided funding for the mission. Each also supplied crew, technology and a range of experiments for the base to conduct. Mission assets were assembled in a much shorter time frame than NASA could ever hope to achieve, and by the early spring of 2034, Nobel Base was an operational installation on the surface of Mercury.

▼ UNDER THE GUN OF LU HSUN (2034-2077)

1.2.2



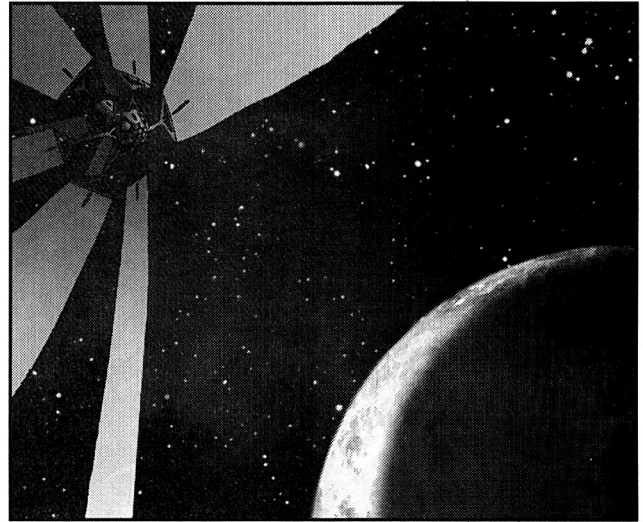
Nobel Base was a small settlement of forty people. It was established beneath Lu Hsun Crater in a network of tunnels created by automated mining robots during the Mercurian night. Research plans included test mines, solar cell experiments and an expedition to the ice craters at the northern pole. Most of the activity was focused on the base's mass accelerator, dubbed the Gun.

A wide range of experiments were dependant on the Gun, the most infamous of which were the solar sail test shots. "Bullets" of waste metal from the test mines were fitted with small solar sails and a rudimentary navigation system. After these bullets were launched, the sails would deploy and the navigation system would guide the bullet to Venus, where the entire mass would descend into the atmosphere. The scientific community was in turmoil; half were outraged at the potential damage to Venus' ecosystem, but the others viewed this as an unprecedented opportunity to explore the gas-shrouded planet, and they provided funding to mount additional sensors on the shots. The argument remained, and the test shots continued for almost forty years.

By 2065, Mercury was entering a so-called "golden age." The population had expanded to around 400 people across three additional bases, several mining operations and a polar research facility. The latter was created as a concession to environmentalists in recompense for the solar sail test shots. The company of Boeing-Mitsubishi built a small orbital shipyard in 2070 to construct solar sail transport barges, and over the next two years, most of the bases were quietly bought out by the secretive New Earth Consortium and converted into commercial facilities. By the time the NEC revealed its Venus terraforming plan, several underground arcologies and orbital colonies were built to house Project New Earth's Mining and Resource Coordination Divisions. Within a few years, Mercury was home to over 100,000 workers.

THE SHORES OF NEW EARTH (2077-2085) ▼

Although larger and larger settlements were appearing on the Venusian surface, there was still little access to the planet's natural resources. Mercury easily supplied the growing demands for metals, its population booming as mining operations and fabrication facilities were expanded. The only real bottleneck to Project New Earth was the lack of volatiles, particularly water. Despite incredible advances in terraforming, Venus had no usable indigenous water and the Mercurian polar ice deposits were too small to warrant the time and expense of exploitation. Both planets relied heavily on water reclaimed from asteroids in the Belt. A network of small processing stations was established to extract volatiles, which were then loaded on to solar sail tankers and shipped to Venus and Mercury. The voyage was long — roughly a year, one way — and required a massive fleet to ensure that regular water deliveries arrived every few months. The expanded Mercurian shipyards had produced almost 350 solar sailers of varying capabilities over the past decade, and most of those ships did nothing but haul water.



BACKWATER (2086-2100) ▼

As Venus became more heavily colonized, many of the Project New Earth personnel were reassigned to planetside Venusian facilities. The inhabitants left behind on Mercury consisted chiefly of miners, ship builders and orbital factory workers, although a large percentage of that workforce was eventually moved to equivalent operations around Venus. A minimal Mercurian administration was left in place, but anything not vital to day-to-day operations was relocated or closed.

Mercury served as little more than a shipyard for the next four decades. Most of the efforts of Project New Earth become focused on exploiting what resources could be accessed from the still-hot Venusian surface. Except for volatiles Mercury was relatively self-sufficient, and continued to serve some purpose in the production of raw metals for Venusian use. The shipyards were the only Mercurian industry operating at something approaching full capacity. Large and immobile, it made more economic sense to leave them functioning until new facilities could be built around Venus in a few years' time. Mercury's transient population grew to include vessel crews in training, as well as their families.

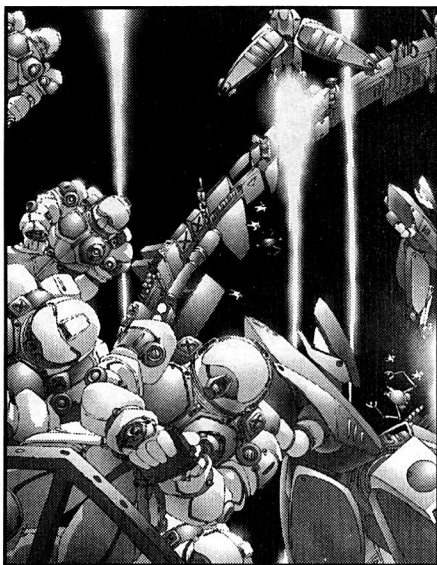
By 2090, Venus was into the first serious throes of the Birthing, the period of its history that would take it from corporate venture to a full-fledged nation. As Earth refugees flooded the planet, the New Earth administration was forced to begin transferring people back to Mercury. The operation quickly turned into a purge, with the Venusian government dumping 'deadweight' personnel onto the inner planet. Although there were some genuine troublemakers and incompetents in the group, most of the exiles were sent to Mercury for political reasons. Entire families were transplanted, and a great deal of resentment grew, not only towards Venus, but also towards a system that emphasized politics and underhanded tactics over real talent.

TOUGH TIMES (2100-2118) ▼

Mercury was spared most of the Birthing pains. Resources were far too limited to support an influx of refugees, not that the overheated wasteland was a destination of choice. Transport fleet assets remained relatively intact and functional, and continued supplying water and raw materials to Venus and its ballooning refugee population. Mercury's calm sailing abruptly turned rough in 2118, when increased raiding by Nomads and renegades cost Venus and its colony several key volatiles-processing stations in the Belt. The bulk of the Venus Home Defense Fleet had been dedicated to escorting the water convoys; the ships in the Belt were too few in number to prevent the losses. The remaining stations could support the population needs of Venus, but only barely. The Venusian Planetary Council enacted the Water Reserve Protection Measure, a draconian rationing law designed to preserve water supplies mainly through cutting shipments to Mercury in half. Mercurian officials try to negotiate a more generous deal, but with a population significantly smaller than that of Venus, the Planetary Council offered little more than vague platitudes about making every effort to locate new sources of water.

1.2.4

1.2.5



▼ THE WATER REBELLION (2219-2120)

The water shipments to Mercury under the Measure were discovered to be far less than promised. A Venusian investigation uncovered a massive water-hoarding scandal, but the Planetary Council, instead of returning the hoarded water to Mercury, redistributed it among the Venusian people. Mercury was forced to strip-mine its meager polar ice craters out of existence, but the operation produced barely a month's supply. Under current projections, Mercurian reserves would be empty by mid-2120.

The situation quickly degenerated, with full-fledged riots by the end of 2119. Long before that point, however, Mercury had embarked on a desperate course of action: the Aqueduct Contingency. Many of the crews in the solar sail and Home Defense fleets, concerned about their families on Mercury, discreetly pledged support to any action that ended the Measure. Several HDF vessels quietly defected to Mercury over the course of the summer, and were assigned to escort an empty water convoy returning to Venus. Once there, they would launch a surprise attack on the orbital defenses and set up a blockade to redirect the much-needed water fleets to Mercury.

◇ THE CONVOY

The convoy arrived at Venus in early 2120. Supported by additional HDF defections, the Mercurian vessels won the encounter; unfortunately, vicious fighting left only five damaged vessels to maintain the blockade of the Venusian spaceways. Over the next two months, combat spread through the transport fleets, but quickly bogged down into a stalemate. Without a strong advantage, the arrival of the next water convoy in April would bring enough loyal HDF vessels to end Mercury's attempts at force. A Mercurian interception mission to capture the April convoy failed, but HDF forces were critically weakened. The defeat of the blockade, while still possible, was no longer certain.

As a last-ditch effort, Mercury threatened to drop the remains of the Stanton II comet on the Tokai arcology unless Venus surrendered. The Planetary Council, however, knew that Mercury lacked the resources to carry out its threat, and called the rebel's bluff. Both sides broke off communications and waited in silence as the April convoy made its approach to Venus. On the eve of the decisive encounter of the rebellion, the Venusian government executed a maneuver that took Mercury completely by surprise: it surrendered.

▼ THE GUILD

Numerous reasons were offered for the Venusian surrender, none of which completely rang true. At the time, Mercury had no desire to look closely at the issue. It had won, and through the surrender terms had gained possession of most of the transport fleets, including half the water convoys. This large number of vessels was far more than Mercury would ever need to support itself, and far more than Mercury could support with its own resources in the long run.

The new Mercurian Administration turned the problem around: most solar nations were either too mistrusting or lacked the ships to trade seriously with their neighbors. Mercury, however, had the material resources to provide a neutral conduit to re-establish stellar trade. Preparations were hasty as the project needed to get underway as quickly as possible, before the fleets became unsupportable. The remains of the New Earth shipping companies banded together into a loosely allied Merchant Guild, with the entire planet supplying the resources necessary. It was a gamble. Mercury relied not only on the need for a neutral party to reintroduce trade, but also on the chance that no one else would be willing to make the sacrifices necessary to take on the role. If the solar nations had grown too paranoid or insular, Mercury would be left destitute, with nothing to show for its efforts but an orbiting graveyard of freighters. Fortunately, this was not the case.

RED SKIES AT NIGHT (2120-2200) ▼

1-2-8

By the end of 2120, the first solar sailing vessels of the Mercurian Merchant Guild were spreading word of its intent to become a neutral trading partner to the other planets. The Jovian Confederacy not only immediately turned down the Guild, but also launched its own attempt to unify the isolated nations. The Jovians met with even more resistance than the Mercurians, and when Venus began to openly support the Guild, it was only a matter of time before the rest signed on with Mercury. Eventually the Confederacy abandoned its efforts at interstellar trade, although it took nine full years for the Confederacy to admit defeat.

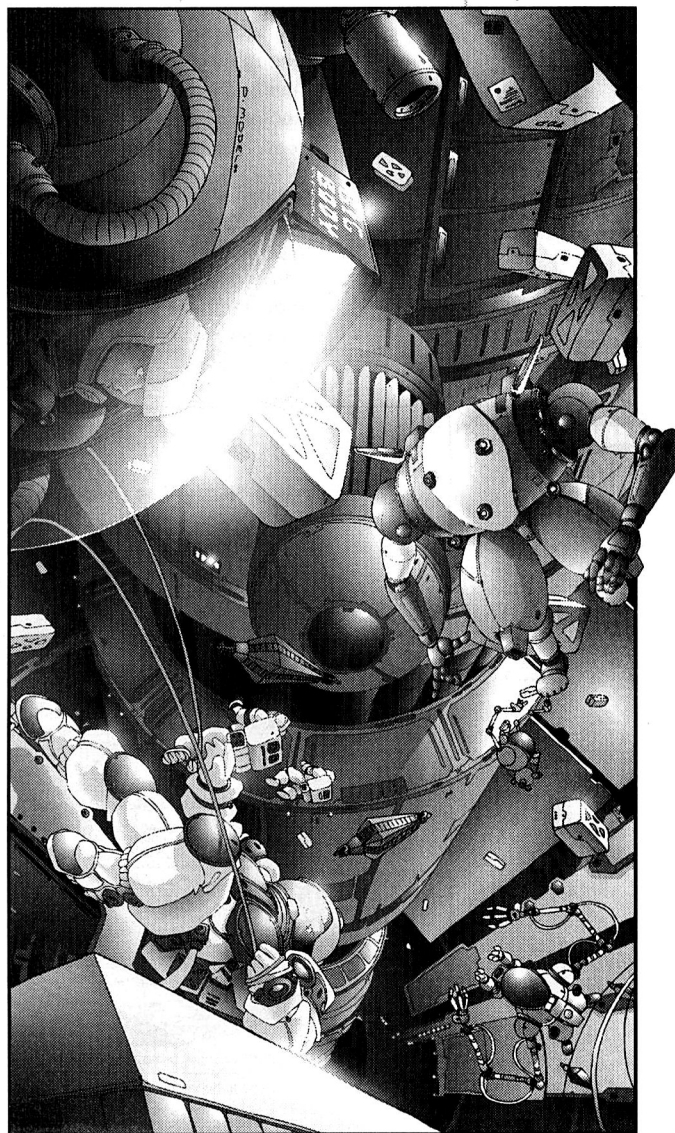
Over the next 80 years, the Guild became a remarkably powerful presence on the stellar scene. Nations quickly learned to take advantage of the Guild's neutrality, sending not only goods and diplomats but also spies and contraband to every destination in the Solar System. The Guild successfully maintained its impartiality, even in situations where humanitarian reasons demanded interference. Mercury did not cultivate many friendships, but it did earn a great deal of respect, not to mention wealth beyond measure. As a single-industry nation, Mercury was a success, and its continued profitability was practically assured if for no other reason than to repay the debt owed to the Guild for reuniting the shattered remains of humanity.

RED SKIES IN THE MORNING (2200-2213) ▼

The sustained prosperity of the Guild — and Mercury — depended greatly on the stability of stellar relations. The Guild considered the old adage of "war is good for business" to be true, but only on a small scale. Nothing that could bring about the breakdown of the entire system could be good. Even Mercury would eventually be called upon to take sides, and an attempt at neutrality could be interpreted as a denial of assistance. The possibility of such a conflict, however, was seen as remote at the turn of the century. Even the sharp change in relations between the Jovian Confederacy and CEGA was regarded as nothing more than a natural part of the cycle. Throughout 2208, however, those nations' respective navies had engaged in several diplomatic incidents, with one deteriorating into an actual firefight.

It was enough to convince Golan Fairbanks, a candidate for the position of Administrator in the 2209 elections, to change his entire platform to say that Mercury and the Guild would both be better off if they were not quite so intertwined. His proposed economic reforms easily won him the position. The ugly events and wholesale destruction during the Odyssey of 2210 gave the impression the entire Solar System was heading for war. While relations did not degenerate to that point, the fear it created convinced much of the population that Fairbanks was right.

While outwardly maintaining an appearance of success, the Guild has been struggling with Fairbanks over control ever since. Though the threat of war still hangs overhead, the immediate priority is maintaining power over its assets. Several months ago, however, another blow was struck. Rumors of a supposed cooperative agreement between the Jovian Intelligence Service and Corvus, Mercury's counter-intelligence agency, began circulating. Despite the fact that there was no hard evidence of collusion, CEGA immediately cooled its relationship with the Guild. The Mercurian Administration denied all knowledge, but the Guild immediately began damage control. Unfortunately, CEGA decided to view the Guild's actions as an implicit admission of guilt, and is using the incident to force concessions from the Guild. Whether or not this begins a downward spiral in relations with the other nations remains to be seen, but there is no doubt it will have a lasting effect on both Mercury and the Guild.



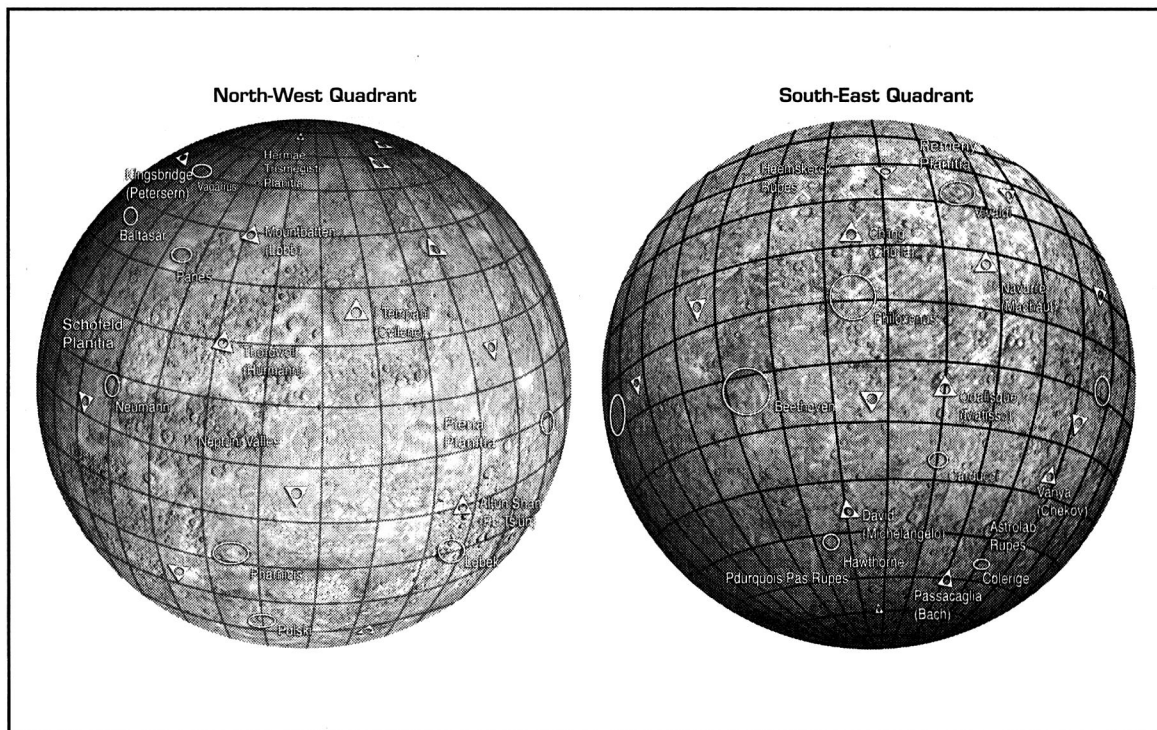
► THE LAY OF THE LAND

Mercury is the Solar System's innermost planet, orbiting only 57.9 million kilometers from the Sun. Initially it was believed that Mercury was tidally locked — that is, that the same side of the planet constantly faced the Sun over the course of its orbit. This was not, as it turned out, the case. Mercury has a very slow rate of rotation, turning one and a half times each orbit. Coupled with Mercury's small orbital diameter, the length of one Mercurian day, from sunrise to sunset, is equal to the length of one Mercurian year, or roughly 88 Earth standard days.

Mercury has an unusually high density for its size. So high, in fact, it is believed that the planet's nickel-iron core may extend 75% of the way out to the planet's surface. How this came about is still a mystery, but one theory speculates that most of Mercury's outer crust was somehow ripped away in some titanic event similar to the one thought to have created the Earth's moon. Mercury also generates a weak magnetic field, suggesting that some of the core might still be molten. There has been extensive research into deep core mining techniques with the idea of exploiting this mineral wealth, but so far nothing has produced results that can be adapted for commercial use.

The surface gravity of the planet is only 39% that of Earth, but it is still strong enough to retain a trace atmosphere of hydrogen and helium particles trapped from solar flares. This low escape velocity has allowed extensive use of mass drivers instead of skyhooks to transport materials from the surface, particularly unprocessed minerals that can be refined in orbit. Despite the inability to reach Mercury's core, there are enough minerals within the surface of the planet to make mining a very lucrative business. On the other hand, Mercury is relatively poor in volatiles — compounds with a low boiling point, such as water, carbon and oxygen. Even though the Sun is the Solar System's largest source of elements such as hydrogen, it will remain unexploitable until some method is developed to harvest matter from the solar wind. Until that point in time, Mercury's heavy reliance upon imported volatiles keeps it from being truly self-sufficient.

The largest complication to the Mercurian environment is temperature. Average daytime heat can reach as high as 470° Celsius, while the nighttime cold can drop to -180° Celsius. The difference is over 600°C, which can wreak havoc on exposed equipment and installations. There is, unfortunately, little that can be done to regulate these temperature extremes except hide materials from the sun and insulate them from the cold, through means such as burying surface settlements deep underground and hiding stations their own artificial shadows.



A QUICK GEOGRAPHY LESSON ▼

The surface of Mercury bears a strong resemblance to Earth's moon. Large, smooth lava field plains separate rougher, cratered areas. The craters themselves range in size from a handful of meters to dozens of kilometers across. The surface of the planet is a dusty reddish hue, discolored in places by old lava flows and rays from impact craters. Settlements and industries are located deep underground as protection from heat and solar radiation, leaving most of Mercury's surface unmarked by human hands. There are a few exceptions, of course, such as the solar collector farms or the strip-mined polar ice craters.

The planetary surface is best visited at night; if someone stayed out for an entire day, however, he would notice some peculiarities in the sun's path across the sky, thanks to Mercury's orbital eccentricity. The view depends on longitude. At the heat poles, for example, it appears that the sun gradually grows in size as it rises. Once up, it briefly reverses direction before continuing on towards sunset, shrinking as it sets.

Rupes: Unique to Mercury, these escarpments mark fault lines created by a compression of the planetary crust. As the core of the planet cooled, the planetary radius shrank by roughly 1 kilometer. This change was more than enough to cause massive upheavals as sections of the already solidified surface were fractured and driven together. Rupes are not recent formations, and most are now quite stable. Many surface way stations and emergency shelters have been dug into rupe cliff faces.

The Heat Poles: Due to Mercury's rotational period, the same sections of the surface always face towards and away from the sun during the planet's closest approach. Called heat poles, these regions center on the equator at approximately 0° and 180° longitude. The average hottest daytime temperature at the heat poles is around 470°C, hot enough to melt lead. This is about 215°C hotter than the highest temperatures found elsewhere on the planet. The very few settlements in these areas consist mainly of deep underground military bases and scientific outposts.

Ice Craters: Most people are surprised to discover that there is — or was — ice on Mercury. Located in only the deepest polar craters, it is suspected the ice there was created either by comet impacts or planetary outgassing. Twenty-three craters contained ice deposits; however, all were mined out in 2119 to supplement the planet's dwindling water reserves during the Tough Times. The last of the Mercurian ice, totaling almost 10 liters, is preserved in a lab in the Chao Meng crater at the South Pole.

Caloris Basin: The single largest geographic feature on the planet, Caloris Basin is a crater roughly 1,300 kilometers in diameter, and was created by an asteroid over 100 kilometers in size. The impact produced rings of mountain ranges up to 3 kilometers tall, and the shock waves shattered the terrain on the opposite side of the planet. Caloris is Latin for heat, an apt name as the basin's southern portion lies within the western (180° longitude) heat pole.

THE MERCURIAN CALENDAR ▼

One of the most famous and controversial acts of the Mercurian Administration was the revision of the standard calendar. The Mercurian Calendar (MC) is still based on a 24-hour clock, but some of the longer time divisions have been revised to suit Mercury's short year. The MC officially began at Year 0 with the signing of the Mercury-Venus armistice in 2120. Time scales are summarized below; however, to avoid confusion, all time and date references in this sourcebook are given in Earth standard where possible.

UNIT OF TIME DESCRIPTION □

Hour	Any units of time of an hour or less are exactly the same as the Earth standard, i.e., 1 hour = 60 minutes = 3600 seconds. On board ship, an hour can be called a "bell".
Watch	Used mainly on board ship, a watch is 8 bells (hours) long.
Two-Four	24 hours, or the equivalent to a standard Earth day. It can also be called a "three-watch". Mercurians do not usually call this time unit a "day" (see below).
Day	Due to the planet's rate of rotation, the length of a single Mercurian day (sunrise to sunset) is equal to a Mercurian year. The terms "day" and "night" are used only to refer to whether or not the sun is directly visible in the overhead sky.
Week	A Mercurian week consists of eight days: Monday, Tyrsday, Wodinsday, Nornsday, Thursday, Freyday, Saturday and Sunday. There are eleven weeks in a year.
Month	Not used because of the short Mercurian year.
Year	88 two-fours. As of January 1, 2213, Mercury was 56 days into the year MC 384.
Eight-Eighty	10 Mercurian years, or 880 two-fours (2.4 Earth years). This is the largest commonly used period of time. A single eight-eighty marks the length of mandatory Guild service and the Administrator's term of office.



"We are not simply the voice of our own nation. We are the air that carries the other nation's voices from ear to ear."

- Golan Fairbanks, Administrator



2-2

2-2-1

2-2-2

► 2.2 AMONG THE HUDDLED MASSES

The actual livable space on Mercury is minimal. Over two thirds of the population are crammed into a handful of orbital colonies, while the remainder inhabits packed underground arcologies. Visitors from off-world are usually unprepared to deal with the population density, no matter how much advance warning they receive. Many are amazed that any kind of society could exist under such conditions, yet the Mercurians have not only kept everything working smoothly, they have flourished like no other solar nation.

<<C>> 2.2.1 SOCIAL SPACE

Mercurian life is a very public thing. To avoid embarrassment or unnecessary conflict, citizens have developed a well-defined system of behavior. Specific conduct is determined by social relationships, with everyone on a level of less than intimate familiarity being treated with cold formality and emotional distance. Relationships tend to fall into two categories: friends and associates. Friends are those who are sought out simply for the pleasure of their company; everyone who is not a friend is an associate. The openness and intimacy shown to friends is utterly inappropriate for associates, who should receive much more formal, unemotional treatment. As a result, the two groups are kept separate, and Mercurians make no secret about whom they consider part of which group.

■ PERSONALITY DISORDERS

Mercurians are generally extroverted, either by nature or by design. With the high population levels, they must learn at an early age how to aggressively assert themselves. Even among friends, social gatherings are highly competitive as individuals struggle for dominance — or even just to get a word in edgewise. Fortunately, Mercurians also learn when to back off. In a society this forceful, traits such as shyness can cripple an individual's potential. Parents and teachers watch constantly for children who exhibit introverted behavior, and take steps to correct the problem as quickly as possible. If left unchecked, such deficiencies would not only impair career potential, they could make a Mercurian a social pariah. Corrective programs are completely funded by the Guild, and are provided free of charge.

▼ 2.2.2 PERSONAL SPACE

Mercurians are conditioned to live in as small an area as possible. They have little concept of personal space, and no taboo about making casual physical contact. This is extremely disconcerting to foreigners, who find themselves constantly touched, brushed and bumped during social interaction. Mercurians are generally oblivious to physical proximity; they must be, in order to function in their crowded, claustrophobic environment. For a few, the constant presence of other human beings becomes such a comfort that they cannot function effectively when left alone for long periods. There are also those who go to the other extreme, and become unable to deal with even the smallest of crowds; some turn to psychological treatment for help, but most simply leave the planet and rarely, if ever, return. The Guild regularly holds mandatory classes and seminars to help Mercurians cope with the relative spaciousness of Guild vessels and also to learn to respect the personal space of people from other cultures.

■ HAVENS

To guarantee a certain degree of mental stability, it is required that each individual over a certain age — around 14 Earth years — be provided with a haven, a place where he or she can be completely, utterly alone. These sound-proofed cubicles are small, often with only enough room for a tiny desk and chair. Standard apartments are equipped with up to three havens adjoining the common room. If there are not enough havens in an apartment, there are always some havens nearby available for rent. Havens are treated as sacred ground: no Mercurian will ever willingly enter another's haven unless the need is dire. Uncalled-for trespassing is a grave social offence, one that might never be forgiven and can even be prosecuted. Individual requirements determine how much time each Mercurian spends in a haven. Haven usage is not tracked, although Mercurians who spend most of their free time inside may be quietly advised by their friends to seek counseling.

THE PRACTICES ◀

There are three central concepts to Mercurian society: Conservation, Perseverance and Vigilance. It is easy for foreigners to write these off as little more than nationalistic slogans, but these words represent the core philosophies that influence society and largely govern the behavior of the Mercurians themselves.

2.3.E

THE PRACTICE OF CONSERVATION ▼

The Practice of Conservation is the easiest to define, and it has the widest impact. To state it simply, nothing is wasted. Mercury's reliance on imported water and organic material has left it little choice but to reuse as much material as technologically possible. Each citizen is obligated both socially and legally to use as little of imported resources as possible, and recycle everything. Those discovered to be "Wasters" not only face hefty fines, they may also find themselves with a reputation that could take years to outgrow.

2.3.F

As a social philosophy, Conservation has gone beyond mere preservation of materials. It has shifted Mercurian survival mentality away from the individual towards the immediate community. This is not to say that Mercurians subordinate personal needs and goals. Rather, they have developed a sensitivity to the needs of the community as a whole and are always conscious of the social implications of their actions.

THE PRACTICE OF PERSEVERANCE ▼

The second Practice, Perseverance, has its roots deep in Mercurian history, when those assigned to work on the planet were chosen for a particular mindset in addition to their physical qualifications. Traits included determination, level-headedness and old-fashioned pioneer stubbornness. While this seems somewhat stereotypical, it was felt at the time that people lacking these qualities would not be able to cope with the rigors of colonial life. Surprisingly enough, the arrival of Venusian political outcasts did very little to dilute the colonists' original mentality. If anything, the local attitude had a profound impact on the new refugees. Even those who grew to hate their lives on Mercury could not help but adopt this one Practice, if only in order to gain the strength to last until they could return to Venus.

2.3.G

Mercury's meritocracy is based directly on Perseverance. It is not a perfect system by any means. Personal achievement is measured through comparison to others, which leads to brutal competition in some careers. Younger Mercurians must adhere to a harsh work ethic in order to establish themselves, and there is an often-expressed concern that this Practice has been perverted into an allegory for ambition. Fortunately, the Practices of Conservation and Vigilance have held the meritocracy's uglier aspects in check. Most Mercurians are unwilling to use Machiavellian tactics for fear of the social backlash.

THE PRACTICE OF VIGILANCE ▼

When asked to define the Practice of Vigilance, most Mercurians answer with one word: safety. It would be unfair to label Mercurians as paranoid, but they have developed an appreciation of their tenuous hold on their homeworld, and how something seemingly insignificant can quickly become life threatening. Citizens are required to immediately report potentially dangerous situations or events. Mercurian communicators and personal beacons (see page 80) are equipped with a "panic button" which, when activated, establishes a radio link to the nearest incident response center. Based on the nature of the call, the center will immediately dispatch police, damage control teams or a Response Squad to investigate the event. If the situation is critical, citizens are expected to drop what they are doing and help if able, or evacuate if not. Many residents carry 'action packs' (see page 80) and all Mercurians possess elementary survival skills.

2.3.H

Visitors to Mercury are required to wear red armbands at all times to warn citizens that the individual is not familiar with the area or with local evacuation procedures. The bands are supposed to identify individuals who may require extra assistance during an incident, but many visitors find themselves either the subject of suspicion or treated like children. However, travelers are warned not to venture beyond their accommodations without the bands. In addition to hefty fines, they may also find themselves subject to the wrath of the local inhabitants for making themselves an even greater risk.

Mercurians also keep a watchful eye on each other. Rash behavior is seen as both a threat and a sign of incompetence, and can result in an individual's immediate reassignment. Negligence is considered an obscene betrayal of trust — it can end careers and make an offender an outcast in his own community. It is also a criminal act, but the prison time resulting from a charge is negligible compared to the social impact.

end of section 2.3 the practices

4.2

2.4.1

CULTURAL NOTE:

2.4.2

E.4.3

Mercury has abandoned more traditional teaching methods in favor of a system tailored to individual students' needs. Early childhood education focuses on learning how to think. Academics begin much later in life, and students are allowed to progress at their own pace. Classes are small, and teachers spend a great deal of time with each student. This system is extremely expensive and work-intensive, but it is considered one of the best in the solar system.

The final scholastic years focus on preparing Mercury's youth for the Guild. Classes are technical in nature, and numerous field trips allow children to experience aspects of Guild life, such as weightlessness and "crowdlessness." Youth groups like the Young Guilders and the Messengers offer much more intense training by putting members through mock Guild apprenticeships. Teens undergo a barrage of tests shortly before they come of age in order to evaluate personal aptitudes. They are not obligated to follow the test results, but there is some social pressure to enter the most personally appropriate careers. A child's education involves more than school. Like Nomads, Mercurians teach their children space survival techniques, and ensure they know the location of the nearest shelters or life pods. Some youngsters even know a little about damage control, although the situation must be truly desperate if children are allowed to help.

A Mercurian legally comes of age at his eighth eight-eighty, roughly the equivalent of 19 Earth years old. At that point, he is required to enlist for mandatory Guild service. The National Service Requirement is a single eight-eighty in length, and is served as an Unbonded Worker. Teens do not have to report for duty immediately; if pursuing advanced education, they can delay for up to two eight-eighties — almost five years.

Enlistees, or "Nationals," undergo a Mercurian year's worth of basic training before receiving their job postings. Assignments are based completely on aptitudes demonstrated during training, and are limited to local facilities or inner-system transports with round-trip travel times of less than 770 days. At the conclusion of mandatory service, Nationals are free to return to their previous lives, although there is tremendous pressure to re-enlist. Bonded Guilders carry considerable social status, but Mercurians cannot even begin to apprentice until their mandatory service has been completed.

DEAF EARS

The Administration's efforts to separate national interests from those of the Guild have created groups who openly refuse Guild service, despite the cultural repercussions. So far, these groups are small and limited to a single planetside community. Interestingly enough, most of the Objectors would willingly serve in the Guild. Their difficulties arise from the fact that they do not have a choice in the matter as it currently stands.

CULTURAL NOTE:

RETIREMENT

There may come a point when a Mercurian realizes his or her needs can no longer be served by membership in the Guild. The transition to retirement is difficult, especially since so much time in a Mercurian's life has been spent preparing for service. Many re-enlist simply because the environment is so comfortable. Those who leave face many unknowns, plus a readjustment to the crowded life on Mercury. However, retirement is also a chance to make a new start.

Retired Mercurians have no shortage of options. A large number stay in space as independent merchants or explorers. Some find jobs as consultants to other solar companies or nations, within the limits of the restrictive non-disclosure contracts imposed by the Guild. Most, however, choose to return to Mercury in the hopes of building a future for themselves at home. The opportunities are plentiful, despite the steadily increasing population. As well, not every Mercurian industry is geared towards supporting the Guild; numerous local companies consider Mercury itself their first concern. The power generation network is a prime example, and the utilities companies are always scouting for new workers. The jobs are prestigious, but the more technical occupations require relocation to remote power-generation settlements.

One of the most unusual occupations is that of Mercurian farmer. These are highly trained botanists and hydroponics specialists who work under the most intense job pressure on the planet. Volatiles and organic materials are so scarce that a minor crop failure could have a major impact on the population. For those who still desire a structured lifestyle, Mercury maintains a national military (see page 22), although it is rather small and under-funded when compared to the Guild Security Corps. There are, of course, the more traditional job roles, ranging from law enforcement (see next page) and medicine right down to the more mundane retail and service industry trades. Guild service has, unfortunately for many, some impact on job opportunities. Individual records are not publicly accessible, but many employers consider a short service history spent completely as an Unbonded Hand an indication of poor performance.

PLAY

The meritocracy inspires a very strong work ethic, and Mercurians are frequently compared to Nomads in terms of going to extremes to relieve job and social stress. Unlike Nomads, however, Mercurians cannot simply go down to the local pub, get drunk and start a brawl, nor are they likely to take up any pastime which involves a great deal of personal risk. There is one option, though, that Mercurians have explored to the fullest: amateur sports.

Any event that involves active team play can be found on Mercury. Professional teams are considered too time consuming, but amateur teams are constantly encouraged to complete. Leagues tend to be small and organized around tiny community sports complexes, although the better teams may be matched against teams from other communities. The sports themselves have been revised to take into consideration the local environments, such as the lower Mercurian surface gravity. The Guild also endorses sports-related pastimes, and many larger transports include impressive athletics facilities.

TRAVEL

Sports competitions go a long way towards relieving stress, but the press of the population is constant. Often the only reprieve is to leave the planet entirely. Mercurians are the most common stellar vacationers of any solar population, and several local economies on Earth, Mars and Jupiter have been set up to cater exclusively to a Mercurian clientele. It is joked that half the Guild crews are nothing more than Mercurian tourists, but this is not far from the truth. The Guild regularly provides 'Working Passage' berths for retired members, allowing them to travel free of charge in exchange for functioning as crew. Retired Mercurians, however, are not actually a part of the Guild and are not entitled to protection should they get in trouble. Mercurians on vacation do not have access to havens, but as compensation their personal quarters are given the same degree of respect from their peers. The larger amount of personal space greatly reduces the need for private time, although the consideration is appreciated.

2.4.4

2.4.5

CULTURAL NOTE:

end of section 2.4 life on mercury

THE ADMINISTRATION ◀

The planetary government is a legacy from Mercury's pre-Guild days. It a simple, direct democracy that was ideally suited to the size of the population residing on Mercury over a century ago. At the time, the Administration had only one real function: ensure the survival of Mercurian citizens. It performed admirably, guiding the people of Mercury to independence from Venus and nurturing the Merchant Guild through its fledgling years. As the population grew, the Administration proved itself less capable of providing effective leadership. In addition to some serious structural flaws, the Guild also placed tremendous pressure on the government to implement pro-Guild policies and programs. The authority of the Administration became so eroded that in essence it ceased to be a national government. The Guild's Princes quietly referred to the Administrator as the Vice-President in charge of Home Cooking, who "served up" anything the Guild ordered. All this changed in 2209 with the election of Golan Fairbanks to the post of Administrator.

Fairbanks' first official act shocked everyone when he successfully used Mercury's anti-trust laws to shut down Guild-backed lobby groups. While the Princes were reeling from the blow, he used the Administration's new freedom to implement a series of commercial reforms, allowing private firms to develop space-based businesses free of Guild involvement, as well as permitting greater foreign investment in Mercurian planetary holdings. Although he himself is a retired Guild captain, Fairbanks' past two terms of service have consisted of well-orchestrated indirect attacks on Guild influence. His intent is not to destroy the Guild; rather, he wants Mercurians to have some independant value. He has had a surprising amount of success.

STRUCTURE ▼

The Mercurian planetary government is a relatively simple organization when compared to the Guild's structural mess. It consists of an Assembly of 38 Councilors, elected by region from the surface and orbital settlements. The Assembly meets daily to debate issues of national importance and determine policies that affect Mercury as a whole. Standing Sub-Assemblies, consisting of three to four Counselors, deal with specific items or issues such as agriculture or foreign affairs. Presiding over the Assembly is the Administrator, functioning as chairperson and arbiter of council proceedings. The Administrator has a wide range of emergency powers that can be invoked to grant him the authority to act as head of state without Assembly approval. The Administrator also has an honorary seat on each Sub-Assembly, although he is rarely capable of attending more than a few meetings a week. The remainder of the Administration is a global bureaucracy charged with supporting and executing policy commitments. Regional and local governments are mirrors of the Administration structure, albeit with fewer Counselors and much more limited capabilities.

ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS ▣

One of the most time-consuming processes in government is the Sub-Assembly Review. Any issues brought before the Assembly must also be debated by all relevant Sub-Assemblies before an Assembly Vote can be held. Originally, Sub-Assemblies were temporary committees, created as necessary to solve problems or deal with unusual issues, and then dissolved. Instead, Sub-Assemblies have become a permanent — and growing — part of the Administration's structure. Despite Fairbanks' open contempt for these committees, he has been unable to introduce any reforms to end their reigns. The job of Administrator is also a concern. The "emergency measures" that allow an Administrator to circumvent the Assembly have few checks. Often, little more than the Administrator's discretion governs how these measures will be used. In the past, Administrators have been too weak and too constrained under the influence of the Guild for this position to be abused. Fairbanks himself made extensive use of emergency measures when he first came to power, and regardless of the good that has come from his actions, he has raised many issues over potential for damage by unscrupulous politicians.

RESPONSIBILITIES ▼

Mercury's economic boom has also sparked new life within the Administration; however, after years of being little more than a Guild puppet, the government is somewhat uncertain about its own mandate. The Administration maintains and regulates all non-Guild territories and assets within Mercury's local space. Beyond this point, opinion varies greatly. Some Counselors believe the Administration should become a replacement for the Guild, taking control of the lives of average Mercurians. Others argue the economy should become even more unfettered, although none have gone as far to suggest completely throwing open the doors. A few have even suggested the Guild be made directly accountable to the Administration, effectively making it government-owned. Whatever the conclusion, the debate is far from over.



▼ 2.6.3 ELECTIONS

The actual election process is physically exhausting but relatively short. Votes are collected over a period of three days, starting with the election day and then allowing time for votes to be tallied and transmitted from all outlying vessels. Candidates, however, must announce their eligibility five Mercurian years (440 24-hour days) in advance of the election. From that point, they are put through a continual barrage of debates, interviews and public appearances, culminating in a crescendo of campaigning over the last twenty days prior to election day. Incumbents are only partially spared this gauntlet; despite the fact they already have the job, they must continue to demonstrate their abilities. Candidates running for Administrator face an even tougher challenge. They must declare their candidacy separately from those seeking Councillorships, and run a planetary campaign as opposed to one within a single county or region. Enormous resources are required, but are out of reach of all but the most well connected politicians. The race is all-or-nothing: the winner governs the planet, the losers receive no compensation whatsoever.

The next Mercurian election is due to be held in early 2214, and it promises to be the most politically charged campaign in decades. There are over 100 hopefuls running for the Assembly, but the focus will be on the three candidates in the race for Administrator.

◇ CANDIDATE: GOLAN FAIRBANKS, INCUMBENT

Golan Fairbanks is a man with few bridges left to burn. Although he led a distinguished career as a Captain in the Guild, few of his friends remained at his side when his first term of office came to a close in 2211. His landslide re-election spurred him to even more daring reforms, but cost him any support he had left in the Guild. Fairbanks' platform has always been simple: bring Mercury out of the shadow of the Guild. His policies have been surprisingly successful, and have earned him the love and respect of the civilian populace, but he has few political allies left to support him in the coming election.

◇ CANDIDATE: HELENA UYL

Helena Uyl is Fairbanks' traditional nemesis, a one-time favorite with the Guild and the presiding Administrator when he first appeared on the political scene. She is a career politician, and served as Councilor for the Angeles District of Helios Station for six consecutive terms before setting her sights on the Administrator's chair. Her campaign against Fairbanks in 2211 failed to swing an appreciable percentage of the popular vote. Her current campaign is being conducted without Guild backing, and while it has suffered from the lack of monetary resources, she has still managed to capture the hearts of those few who see Fairbanks as a reckless anarchist.

◇ CANDIDATE: SEI VAN DEN ELZEN

Once ZONet's primary Mercurian news contact, Sei Van den Elzen is a relative newcomer to the political scene. She is young, charismatic, and most importantly, the candidate the Guild has chosen to support. Van den Elzen is an unknown quantity. In debates, she has shown herself to be intelligent and insightful, but she has yet to clarify her opinion on issues that do not involve confronting Fairbanks. It is difficult to tell how well she will perform in the upcoming election. Guild backing has earned her many supporters, but not at the expense of Fairbanks' popular following. She may be able to gather enough support to actually defeat Fairbanks, provided that Helena Uyl does not split the anti-Fairbanks vote on election day.

STELLAR RELATIONS ◀

Mercury is represented on the international scene both by its diplomatic corps and the Merchant Guild. Technically, the Guild is a private business, but it has such a presence across the Solar System that it will act as an ambassador should no diplomats be available. This is not a problem since Mercury's foreign policy has been dictated by the needs of the Guild for decades and foreign governments will get the same answers regardless of whom they talk to.

2.7

ABSOLUTE NEUTRAL ▼

The success of the Merchant Guild has allowed Mercury to become disproportionately influential among the solar nations. This influence — and the status of the nation as a whole — relies on maintaining the illusion that the Merchant Guild is critical to stellar trade and relations, which can only be done through enforcing a policy of complete and unconditional neutrality. Mercury has earned both praise and contempt for remaining uninvolved in international politics. Nations are grateful that Mercury offers neither military nor political support to any cause; however, Mercury also refuses to provide humanitarian aid for fear of damaging political repercussions. The solar nations have come to expect only one thing from Mercury: impartial trade.

2.7.1

Mercury expects the same unbiased considerations in return. This is not always the case, as Guild ships are boarded and searched regularly by a variety of governments. Mercury does not tolerate interference with its own internal affairs, however, and always presents a united front regardless of how bad the Guild-Administration bickering may become.

IN THE GOOD BOOKS ▼

Mercury and the Guild try to avoid treating any group differently from any other, unless that group has earned itself lesser consideration. As a result, Mercury's "good books" are simply lists of all who have not yet made their ways into the "bad books." Despite Mercury's efforts at universal impartiality, there are at least two groups that receive more attention than the rest. The Guild and the Nomads have established a relationship of mutual respect. The Guild offers inexpensive transportation between homesteads, and also trades vital resources such as medicine and high-tech components. In exchange, Nomads provide technical expertise and often serve as Unbonded crew. As a result, the Guild knows much more about the Nomads than any other agency can boast, including Solapol. Mercury also shares an odd relationship with the Jovian Confederacy. Even before the rumors of collusion, there was some hint of mutual technology and intelligence exchanges, although not enough to suggest or support the possibility of an alliance.



2.7.2

IN THE BAD BOOKS ▼

Despite Mercury's stellar presence, its blacklist is a relatively short one. The groups on it are mostly those organizations who have never been on good terms with either Mercury or the Guild, such as the Titanian Hydrocarbon Corporation. Both Martian states have been marginal entries for some time. The Guild considers them needlessly overzealous when boarding and searching Guild vessels for contraband cargo. Those in the bad books usually receive little or no Guild service, although Mercury will happily change its mind if the offenders make appropriate amends.



2.7.3

There is currently a potential for the blacklist to grow. The gossip about a Mercury-Jupiter co-operative state has caused a definite chill in the relationship between the Guild and the Central Earth Government and Administration. CEGA is unlikely to cancel any Guild contracts, but it has made the business environment around Earth extremely uncomfortable for Mercury. The Guild's concessions to CEGA have weakened its position to the point where threats of blacklisting may be meaningless.

VENUS ◇

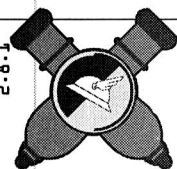
Mercurians have entered a strange love-hate relationship with the descendants of their former masters. Even a century later, Venusians are still referred to as "hoarders" and "wet heads." Mercury never misses an opportunity to remind Venus of its humiliating defeat; Venus has had its own revenge, however, by becoming one of its ex-colony's best customers. Guild neutrality offers Venusians some interesting benefits, not the least of which is the chance to watch Mercurians swallow their pride in order to do business with 'the enemy.'



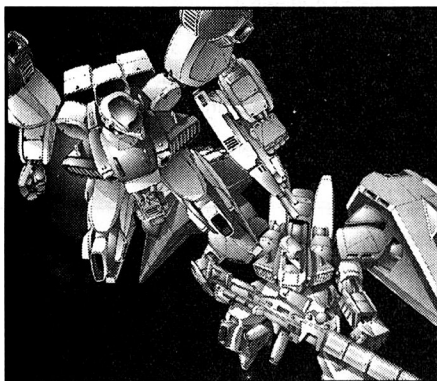
end of section 2.7 stellar relations

2.8

2.8.1



► MERCURIAN MILITARY MIGHT



Until recently, the Mercurian armed forces seemed headed for the history books. Severely underfunded, the organization was forced to contract itself out as an auxiliary work force to help make ends meet. Most soldiers were "reservists," rotating in for 220 days out of each eight-eighty for training and active duty. Enlistment was dwindling, and experienced full-timers were leaving for jobs with better potential. The last few years have seen a dramatic change, fueled mainly by deteriorating stellar relations. Money is being redirected from as many sources as possible to bring enlistment, training and equipment up to modern standards. It has not been an easy task — funding is scarce, and opposition by the Guild and some Counselors have stalled almost every aspect of the refurbishment.

▼ THE NAVY

The Navy is completely separate from the Guild Security Corps. It was created as a defense fleet shortly after independence was won from Venus. Lack of personnel and funds have reduced the force to some fifty vessels, most of which are armed transports. Only two groups of vessels function exclusively as warships. The first consists of eighteen Erel-Class corvettes, which are under constant use for training exercises. The other group consists of eight vessels known publicly only as the Seraphim. These massive solar-sail battle-ships are kept deployed in orbits close to Mercury. Their capabilities are unknown, and considering Mercury's isolation, will probably never be demonstrated.

The strongest opposition to military refurbishment is focused on the Navy. Why spend the money when the Guild Security Corps is better trained and equipped? Currently, the national Navy is not considered a 'black water' fleet (that is, suitable for interplanetary operations), and would be sorely pressed in any engagement. Recent debates have focused on the Navy's high production of exo-armors and fighters. Even with the refurbishment, the Navy lacks the resources to deploy these assets, and has been forced to reassign them to Guild vessels under Security Corps command.

To provide a clear-cut justification not only to fund the national Navy but also to increase its role, Fairbanks is attempting to gain control of the Guild's Emergency Search and Rescue division. He reasons that the ESR not only does not fall under the Guild's mandate, it is crippled by the Guild's need to remain absolutely neutral. Although there are numerous documents to support Fairbanks' position, the Guild will never willingly surrender the ESR to Fairbanks, let alone the national Navy.

▼ GROUND FORCES

2.8.2



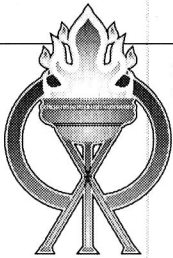
Traditionally, the ground forces have been organized in small groups and trained to fight guerilla-style engagements both on the surface and in the cramped conditions of the underground and orbital settlements. The majority of the units are conventionally equipped infantry deployed via armed shuttles. The remainder of the forces consists of supply and support groups. Armor is rare, and until recently consisted only of a handful of artillery units.

When the military refurbishment was announced, it was understood that there would never be enough money to bring Mercury's ground forces in line with the armies of the other solar nations. Instead, the decision has been made to stay focused on guerilla tactics. Money earmarked for equipment upgrades is being spent almost exclusively on the infantry, either to improve standard equipment or purchase Hellhound exo-suits. All of the remaining funding is being poured into training.

It is interesting to note that even after almost a century of existence, the Mercurian ground forces are still untested in combat. Although an invasion of Mercury is extremely unlikely, ground soldiers train constantly in every environment available on the planet. Military analysts are reluctant to speculate on how well these units will perform in an actual fight, but they agree that anyone challenging them on their home soil is in for a nasty surprise.

CORVUS ◀

This is Mercury's civilian intelligence agency, charged with protecting planetary interests from foreign interference. Corvus is answerable to the Assembly, although reports usually pass through only a few select Sub-Assemblies. An information exchange is also regularly conducted with the Merchant Guild Security Corps. Corvus is named after the crater that became Mercury's secret command base during the Merchant Revolt. The operations center is still housed at the base, although the facilities have been expanded and fortified.



2.9

HISTORY ▼

Corvus was formed in early 2120 from parts of the planetary command and control structure developed to lead Mercurian forces during the Water Rebellion. The agency was intended to operate specifically against Venus, but the new and mysterious Merchant Guild became the target of intelligence forays by every government capable of space travel. Corvus eventually adapted to the broader role of providing security protection for the Guild, but during the intervening time security measures were so ineffective that the Guild was forced to move its entire head office to a solar sail barge for almost five years. Most of Corvus' operations, both current and historical, are classified. Only a few incidents have been leaked, such as the theft of the liner Hebrides or the Ra data bombings. Everything else has played out behind the scenes, and only a few people in the upper echelons have anything resembling a complete picture of the agency's activities.

2.9.1

OPERATIONS ▼

It is more accurate to call Corvus a counter-intelligence agency. It does send agents abroad, but it is designed for more of a defensive role, locating and neutralizing foreign operatives attempting to gain access to Mercurian personnel, archives and records. Corvus is kept surprisingly busy in this role. The unique knowledge possessed by the Merchant Guild is a target few can resist. Corvus also continues in its role as watchdog of Venus. The current political upheavals there have occupied foreign agencies whose discovery efforts are normally directed at Mercury, but Corvus remains vigilant all the same. Occasionally Corvus engages in "pre-emptive prevention," striking at groups with a history of anti-Mercury activity. Such operations are rare and always take place outside of local Mercurian space. Corvus field agents are always partnered, although they may be deployed in teams of several pairs. Agents have full arrest powers and the freedom to operate anywhere within Mercurian space, although the Guild discourages operations on its merchant vessels. Corvus maintains a network of discreet field offices, and often only the agents who work at a specific office know its location. It has an extensive support staff, the majority stationed at Corvus Crater until necessary.

2.9.2

CURRENT CONCERNS ▼

With Golan Fairbanks' opening up of Mercury, Corvus has been forced to relocate many assets to local Mercurian space to deal with an influx of infiltration agents. The latest attempts have been from CEGA agents trying to verify rumors of a Jovian-Mercurian agreement. The insertions were deflected, but the agency is not pleased about dealing with threats in its own backyard. Most recently, there have been several unsuccessful hacking attempts targeting the Guild's Central Tracking Division, specifically the Belt Dispatch area. Little is known about the attacks, save that they were professionally executed from within local space and targeted databases containing Nomad colony locations. Corvus has also been scrambling to take advantage of the recent political turmoil on Venus to plant new agents. This is a long-term plan; the agents will take several years to establish themselves securely before becoming operational. Corvus barely has the assets to implement a plan of this scope, but this is not an opportunity the agency can afford to miss.

2.9.3

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS ▣

The rumors of collusion are true — Corvus has had a working partnership with the Jovian Intelligence Service since 2207. The arrangement began in order to pool data on Venus, but it has since grown to a technological exchange. Solapol discovered the arrangement in 2209, and although the information has been restricted, Jupiter suspects that the organization is the source. While the information has sent the Guild into a frenzy of public relations damage control, it has had little effect on Mercury-Jupiter relations. The partnership would have been revealed in another year anyway, when Mercury and the Guild begin deploying Jovian exo-armors. Corvus has had a far less productive relationship with the Guild, which until recently was putting pressure on the Administration to deploy Corvus for support duties, including ferreting out pirates in the Belt. The attempts at misuse ended when Golan Fairbanks came to power, but relations between Corvus and the Guild have never improved beyond a minimal working level.

HISTORICAL NOTE:
end of section 2.9 corvus

► ECONOMICS

2.10

While the Merchant Guild may be a great commercial success, Mercury itself is far too isolated to be a center of trade. The only commodities shipped to Mercury are those that the planet requires, although there is an appreciable outward flow of certain goods. Mercury's domestic economy, however, is in the midst of a boom. Thanks largely to Golan Fairbanks' reforms, new business start-ups are at an all-time high, though some of the increase has come at the cost of the Guild's own local business interests. There is even some foreign investment, although the Administration has been picky about whom it lets in. Despite this trade-off, the boom has provided Mercurians with some relief from the horrendous cost of living brought about by the planet's isolation and reliance on imported items necessary for survival. Standard monetary credits are accepted locally, but Mercury still prefers to use its own currency within its borders. The Ration Point, abbreviated to RP and pronounced "arp," is valued through a formula that weighs volatiles' importing costs against current stockpiles. By mid 2213, 1 Arp was worth about 2.23 credits.

▼ EXPORTS

2.10.1

Mercury is rich in easily accessible heavy metals, including some radioactive materials. Despite their mutual history, Venus remains one of Mercury's largest customers. Ore is delivered via mass drivers from a point just before Mercury's faster orbit carries it past Venus. The market for radioactive materials has many more clients, reaching as far as the orbital colonies at Earth. However, as a policy, the Merchant Guild will never knowingly ship weapons-grade radioactive materials — not even Mercury's own supply. Mercury is still attempting deep-core mining in the hopes of reaching the effectively limitless wealth of the planetary core. There are many problems to overcome, including logistical issues like disposing of the excavated rock and dirt. Several operations are currently underway. Through the Merchant Guild, Mercury also has a highly specialized labor force that is very much in demand. Mercurians can be found in all aspects of space-based industry, particularly those involving shipping. The Guild continues to enforce restrictive non-disclosure agreements even after members retire; fortunately, most Mercurians keep current employers well informed on how to steer clear of trouble.

▼ IMPORTS

2.10.2

Mercurian survival has always been a matter of simple economics: the supply of volatiles must be enough to meet the demand of the citizens. If the supply falls short, people die. This description may seem overly dramatic, but Mercury's lack of an indigenous source of volatiles has forced an absolute reliance on imports of foodstuffs, water, hydrocarbons and any manufactured product containing organic elements. These items are stockpiled on the planet, but Mercurians are well aware there is only a finite amount readily accessible. Luxury items are also very much in demand. Anything organic, such as cotton clothing, plastic sports equipment, or exotic foods, can be sold at an impressive profit. Certain restrictions apply, and all items must pass quarantine, a sterilization procedure or both. Importing animals is not permitted at all. The Guild has lifted restrictions slightly, allowing private importers to operate in Mercurian space, although the importers must pay hefty licensing fees, adhere to a code of operation and sell their goods only through specific brokers.

▼ THE WATER TRADE

2.10.3

The year leading up to the Water Rebellion taught some harsh lessons in conservation which, almost a century later, have not been forgotten. The rationing contingencies put into effect at that time have been relaxed but not ended. While effective, at best they serve only to regulate Mercury's needs. The largest drain on the planetary water reserves comes from shipping, specifically the use of hydrogen as fuel. A significant portion of the water trade is dedicated to supplying this one demand.

Mercury's primary source of water is the Belt. With the help of Nomad prospectors, volatiles-rich asteroids are processed by Guild refinery vessels and transported to storage stations. The Guild maintains a Transit Fleet (see page 40) of Ophan magsail barges strictly for the purpose of shipping water from these stations to Mercury. The magsails are heavily escorted until they pass the orbit of Mars. Water is not a much-sought commodity by pirates, but attacks have been known to occur. From time to time the Guild attempts to capture an inward-bound comet and divert it into a Mercurian orbit. The comet must be encased within a shell, partially as protection and partially to collect gasses boiled out of the rock by the close proximity to the sun. Success has been elusive — Venus also gathers water in this manner, and unarmed Guild freighters can offer little argument should a cruiser decide to take control.

EXPLORATION ▼

Mercury backs an impressive number of scientific expeditions. The Merchant Guild regularly fields or sponsors missions to anywhere in the Solar System save Saturn — the Titanian Hydrocarbon Corporation rarely permits Guild vessels to enter its space. There are many private exploration vessels for hire, though these are shorter-ranged than Guild ships. Most endeavors consist of routine mapping and geological surveys. Only the expeditions to the outer Solar System still carry any degree of romanticism, but the enormous cost makes these excursions few and far between. Mercury holds the record of being the farthest-traveled of the solar nations thanks to the Boonstoppel Expedition, a foolhardy attempt to reach Pluto while it lay at aphelion, beyond Neptune's orbit. The mission was successful, but several crew perished, supplies nearly ran out and the ship had to be towed the last leg back to Jupiter after its drives shut down.

2.10.4

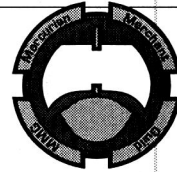
SHIPWRIGHTS ▼

The Guild has given Mercurian aerospace engineers ample opportunity to test transport designs under almost every conceivable condition. The experience gained has made Mercurian commercial vessels some of the safest craft currently in service. Aerospace firms create partnerships with independent shipyards closer to major markets to construct commercial vessels. The arrangement is guaranteed income for the shipyards, and makes Mercurian vessels universally available. In exo-technology, however, Mercury is lagging behind. It has fielded only two exo-armor designs, courtesy of Hermes Aerospace. The Brimstone is versatile, but its production has been consistently falling short of required levels. The recently introduced Bael is a space-superiority unit, but it has just commenced its initial production run and the numbers are still low.

2.10.5

THE MERCHANT GUILD ▼

Whatever Golan Fairbanks' attitude towards the Guild, he cannot deny that it is Mercury's main source of income; it's success is helped considerably by the lack of direct competition. The Solar System's second and third largest mercantile organizations — the Titanian Hydrocarbon Corporation and the Jovian Hansea, respectively — are not interested in expanding into system-wide transport operations. On the other hand, both have been extremely successful in keeping the Guild out of their own domains. The only other issue that could affect Guild prosperity is war. It is possible that CEGA and the Jovian Confederation may be trading blows in the near future, but there is more concern that smaller-scale conflicts could disrupt trade. Mars is a prime example of a situation that has made the business environment extremely uncomfortable.



9.05.21

INSURANCE ☒

The large disparity between various solar nations' safety standards and certification requirements has made it virtually impossible to commit any universal standards to writing. Frustration from ship owners and banking institutions alike has handed the Guild an unexpected moneymaking opportunity: space insurance. Respect for its own high values has led to a demand for Guild ship inspectors as well as documentation to prove a given ship meets with approved Guild standards. The Guild did not take much convincing to see that its neutrality also made it the logical choice to offer insurance for the ships it certifies. The service practically sold itself, and inspections and insurance are available from almost every Guild office in the Solar System. The Guild now has a nearly unbreakable hold on the industry. Other solar nations have upped their standards to match the Guild, but Mercury remains the preferred insurer.

CULTURAL NOTE:

A BETTER, STRONGER MERCURY ▼

The new Mercurian boom has attracted a great deal of interest from commercial powers across the Solar System. Despite the planet's isolation, foreign investors are curious about the investment potential. Even though some foreigners are allowed to invest in Mercury, it is only within local planetary space. Foreigners will never be allowed to own a portion of the mighty Merchant Guild.

The Administration and its numerous Sub-Assemblies have given the matter a great deal of thought, and have come to a unanimous conclusion: the matter needs more debate. The idea of international investment pushing Mercury's economy to unheard-of heights is seductive, but it is offset by the fact that Mercury has already been exploited by one commercial interest, practically to the point of extinction. The fear of repeating the past is inspiring excruciating caution as well as some fear the boom may be over before Counselors finally make up their minds.

2.10.7

THE MERCHANT GUILD

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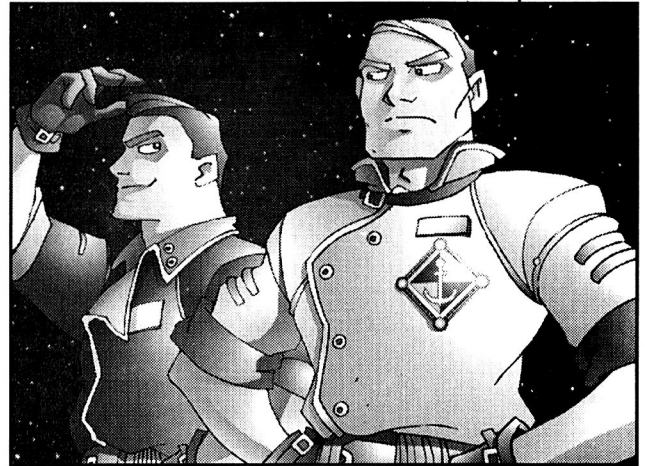


"I (state your name) do solemnly and honorably promise to abide by the tenets of the Mercurian Merchant Guild, perform to the best of my ability all duties with which I am charged and keep in confidence the knowledge with which I am entrusted."

– The Guild Oath, Verbal Component (Short Version)

REAL POWER ◀

The Guild Charter was drafted in early June of 2120, with the intent to create a single organization out of all the shipping companies that had survived the fall of Earth and the Water Rebellion. The initial effort was a haphazard amalgamation, but over the decades of its existence, it has grown into one of the most powerful private organizations in existence, with enough clout to rival some planetary governments. The Guild exerts a massive influence on not only Mercurian domestic policy, but also every aspect of Mercurian life. Gail Armatrading, the Administrator during the Guild's formation, laid the foundation for changing Mercury's industrial and economic areas into a support structure for the Guild. It was — and still is — a planet-sized gamble. If the Guild collapses for any reason, Mercury's economy will fall with it. With the decline in stellar relations, such a collapse is being seen as more than a remote possibility, leading Golan Fairbanks to try to end Mercury's reliance on the Guild.



A BETTER, STRONGER MERCURY. . . ▣

. . . Will not be created through independent Mercurian markets. The Guild was formed simply because Mercury had nothing to offer the other nations they could not already have from other cheaper, closer sources. The current economic "good times" will not last, and foreign interest in investment is just a passing fad. When things die down, Mercury will once again have nothing to support it but the Guild.

- Ross Aldinach, Director of Assets, Tidswell House

THE PRACTICE OF *INTER NOS* ▼

The Guild has what could be described as a fourth Practice. *Inter Nos* translates literally as "between us," and refers to the aura of secrecy and mysteriousness the Guild cultivates towards its foreign clients. Much of *Inter Nos* is simple misdirection and obscurity, done through elements such as the Merchant's Tongue. Some of it is unintentional, such as the Guild's convoluted structure, but has worked out beneficially. Some of it, however, is accomplished through the complex and thorough non-disclosure contracts the Guild insists be signed before it does business with anyone. These contracts have proven more than adequate in stopping even moderately serious attempts to collect information from current or former Guild members and even non-Mercurian employees. Whatever the methods, the end result is an organization that has remained largely unknown despite its size. In the same way that Guild neutrality has earned it a great deal of respect, *Inter Nos* has earned it a great deal of suspicion.

THE MERCHANT'S TONGUE ◇

This is an artificial language used throughout the Guild. Like Spacer's Runic, it is designed to convey information in as short a time as possible. Unlike Spacer's Runic, there is no written form of Merchant's Tongue. Due to the numerous linguistic influences on Mercury, all languages, including Merchant's Tongue, are written out using a standard phonetic alphabet.

The Merchant's Tongue is constantly changing. New sounds are created with a linguistic system called "Rolling Phonemes." This method generates a series of vocalizations which can be easily memorized and pronounced, and can be tailored to suit the vocal capabilities and limits of any language or dialect. It is not a code — it only works on the phonologic and morphologic levels (that is, it generates basic sounds and word groupings). Other procedures, which the Merchant Guild has declared highly classified, are used to assign meanings to the sound groups.

New words are slowly introduced to replace those which have been in use for approximately an eight-eighty. Guilders are encouraged to use new words whenever possible, although lapses into older vocabulary is accepted. Vocabulary is introduced during crew changeover periods, when Guilders are still on active duty but not in the middle of a convoy or patrol.

CULTURAL NOTE:

3.1.1

end of section 3.1 real power



► STATUS

3.2

Several methods are used to track an individual's standing within the Guild. Some means, like rank, are used only in specific situations, and may vary in terms of responsibility and pay depending on the House or Division. Only one method is universally applied, and it is referred to simply as "Status." The Guild divides Status into two basic levels, Bonded and Unbonded, determined by whether or not an individual has sworn the Oath and become an official member of the Guild.

▼ UNBONDED HANDS

3.2.1

Unbonded Hands are those who have not sworn the Oath. They are either contract workers or Mercurians fulfilling their National Service Requirements. The first term of a Mercurian's service with the Guild is always as an Unbonded worker. No-one ever begins a Guild career as Bonded. Anyone can work for the Guild under a standard work contract. They are paid by the Guild, and may enjoy some perks while under contract, such as free medical treatment or transportation, but are not privy to Guild secrets. Unbonded workers may be barred from certain areas, including the Bridge, Engineering and Bonded Guilders' quarters. Unbonded hands have limited advancement opportunity within the Guild, and unless they are Mercurian citizens, they have no chance at ever becoming Bonded. Unbonded jobs include anything the Guild does not consider vital, although some degree of technical knowledge may be required. Examples include rescue specialist, cargo worker/EVA specialist, general technician, damage control generalist and so on. Unbonded Status is broken down into two additional levels: General and Good Standing, decided by performance on the job. Anyone of Good Standing receives preferential treatment and higher pay. Unbonded Mercurians must be in Good Standing to be offered membership; completing the National Requirements is not enough.

■ WEARING THE REDS

CULTURAL NOTE:

Unbonded hands are required to wear red-colored uniforms for quick visual identification, mainly for security and segregation purposes. Unbonded hands serving as ship crews must wear the Reds at all times. Otherwise, the Reds are required only while on Guild property. The Guild even goes so far as to insist that flight suits, space suits and any other protective gear also be red. The Guild issues all Reds work and duty uniforms only. There is no Red formal wear.

▼ BONDED GUILDERS

3.2.2

These are the sworn members of the Merchant Guild. Only Mercurians are permitted this Status, although there are instances of foreigners becoming Bonded after successfully applying for citizenship. Guilders have access to the secrets of the Guild. They know the codes, as well as other important information necessary for their jobs. Guilders have full access to all areas of a Guild vessel, save for those off-limits due to safety or security. Guilder uniform style varies; the Guild is tolerant of variations between Houses and Divisions, so long as no style incorporates the color red. Bonded and Unbonded Guild members may have the same jobs, but Guilders are given greater authority, higher pay and better chance of promotion. Mercurians must also be Bonded in order to hold any administrative positions, work within the Security Corps or the Board.

Bonded Status has two levels beyond general standing. Commended Guilders are those who have received recognition for achievements above and beyond the scope of their regular duties. This status is awarded by a peer review. Sponsored Guilders are likewise recognized, but the achievements are great enough to be recognized by a Prince, and possibly even the Board of Directors. Both Statuses carry a great deal of prestige, and can be revoked as punishment. Mercurians selected to become full Guild members are required to undergo an apprenticeship, known informally as "earning the buttons." The length and content of apprenticeships varies, but most last about two Mercurian years, or 172 days. The time is devoted to learning the details of the Apprentice's House or Division, as well as specific job training. Mercurians must swear the Oath before the apprenticeship begins, but are not Bonded until they are issued their Mate's Buttons at the end.

■ THE OATH

CULTURAL NOTE:

The Oath is more than a verbal promise. It is a series of binding service and non-disclosure contracts designed to ensure continuing loyalty and obligation to the Guild even after retirement. Violating the Oath brings harsh recriminations, including repossession of personal belongings, heavy fines, or even sentencing to a Guild penal labor crew. The violator is, of course, entitled to a trial, but the Guild has its own internal judicial system for resolving such issues.

BUTTONS ▼

Buttons are large, ornate, metal disks, about eight centimeters in diameter. They are used to denote rank and occasionally department or specialization in areas where such information needs to be readily identifiable, such as onboard ship. Only Guilders on active duty are allowed to wear buttons; retired Guilders may be issued smaller versions of their final service button. Unbonded workers do not wear buttons; instead, they wear patches similar in design. Buttons are issued in base metal colors of bronze, silver and gold to denote status of Bonded, Commended and Sponsored, respectively. Button insignia is standardized, but there is some variation between Divisions and Houses. The button border indicates rank, and a specialist's symbol, a divisional symbol, a House symbol or the general Guild square-rigger icon fills the center.

SHIPBOARD RANKS ▼

Shipboard ranks are comprised of two items: the rank itself, and a qualifier based on job type. For example, a Mate working on solar sails is called a Top's Mate. A list of job types can be found on page 42. On board Guild vessels, rank is used instead of Status to determine the command hierarchy, although higher status Guilders may receive better treatment. A Bonded Guilder of any rank is superior to all Unbonded hands.

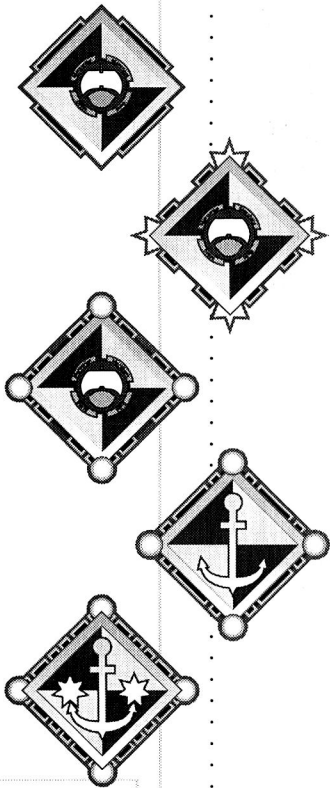
Mate: Mates are the menial laborers. They are found in every House and Division, toiling away at the lowest levels of their respective jobs, at the bottom of the hierarchy. Mates can be either Bonded or Unbonded. For any given job, the only real difference comes from their respective security clearances. As a note, Apprentices are treated as lower than Bonded Mates, but higher than any Unbonded rank.

Lead: A Lead (pronounced LEED) commands a group of Mates. The number of Mates depends on the job, but twelve is the maximum. Leads are not normally placed in charge of other Leads unless a large level of job coordination is required, but is beyond the scope of the commanding Master Officer. While in such a position, Leads are called Chief Officers. The rank of Lead is not necessarily a command position; however, a Guilder of this rank without subordinates is still addressed as Lead. Leads can be either Bonded or Unbonded.

Master Officer: Master Officers are department heads, section leaders or responsible for some highly specialized (or classified) ship function. They are responsible for the coordination of all day-to-day activities within their respective domains, and ensuring Mates and Leads are performing at expected levels. Master Officers are always Bonded, and there is usually only a handful on board any given vessel. Certified doctors within the Guild are given this rank to give them the authority to enforce recommendations and treatments.

Executive Officer: The Executive Officer is the Captain's right hand, and oversees the day-to-day operations of the entire ship. He is capable of taking the place of any command officer in an emergency, including the Captain. He is also responsible for offering alternative choices and opinions for the Captain's consideration. Executive Officers are always Bonded, and there is only ever one assigned per ship. An Executive Officer not actively assigned to a vessel is referred to as a Senior Master Officer.

Captain: The Captain commands an entire vessel. The type of vessel is irrelevant, save that it cannot be an auxiliary vessel of another ship or station and it must be capable of prolonged space travel. As a note, a person commanding an auxiliary vessel is called a coxswain (pronounced COOK-son). This title goes to those of either Lead or Master rank, but not actual Captains. Captains are always Bonded. All Guilders of Captain rank not assigned to head a ship are instead called Commanders.



CULTURAL NOTE: VARIATIONS ON THE THEME ☐

As the Guild claims all nautical history as its heritage, it allows the informal use of several more traditional rank titles, some of which are so dated they have no relevance whatsoever to space travel. Also, some administrative sections of the Guild have deemed nautical ranks inappropriate, and have adopted different titles. The following table is a comparison chart of a few of the more common titles.

Rank	Alternate Names	Administrative Equivalent
Mate	Hand, Salt, Stoker (for Engineers)	Clerk
Lead	Crew Boss, Petty Officer	Supervisor
Master Officer	Chief, Master	Manager
Executive Officer	Exec, XO, First Mate, Senior Master Officer	Deputy Comptroller
Captain	Skipper, Master of the Boat	Comptroller



► STRUCTURE

The structure of the Merchant Guild, when not obscured by the Practice of *Inter Nos*, is still quite a byzantine creation. At the Guild's birth, the organization was relatively simple: a small governing body coordinated the activities of several allied shipping companies. The addition of divisions external to those companies has created complex bureaucratic relationships where unrelated administrations overlap, and in some cases control each other's assets. The fact that the Guild functions as well as it does is regarded more as an act of divinity than mere bureaucratic cunning. With the Guild deliberately further confusing the picture with code names, secret handshakes and passwords as well as the constant revision of the Merchants' Tongue, non-members find Guild structure nearly impossible to understand.

▣ UNITED FRONT

The Merchant Guild has never shown anything but a unified face to the nations of the Solar System. Most foreigners see the Guild as a single, massive yet mysterious organization, and are completely unaware of the level of internal competition. On those rare occasions where it does spill over into public view, such as two freighters arriving at the same destination to pick up the same cargo, it is generally written off as an organizational mistake.

▼ DISPATCHES

The Solar System is broken up into regions of control for both bureaucratic and logistical purposes. Each zone is called a **Dispatch**, and roughly corresponds to bands that follow planetary orbits. Most Dispatches are further broken down into **Zones** according to local population, commercial traffic, political status, or volume of space. The final Dispatch, Central Guild, is not an actual region of space. It was created to track assets deemed vital to the Guild regardless of how they may be physically deployed. The code names of Dispatches and Zones change frequently, but it is rare for the actual regional boundaries to be altered.

Dispatch	Zones
Mercury	Surface, Local Space
Venus	Local Space
Earth	Surface (CEGA), Surface (Non-CEGA), Luna, Earth Orbitals
Mars	Surface (Federation), Surface (Republic), Local Space
Asteroid Belt	Lysenko and Affiliate Clans, plus 12 volumetric regions, starting at the current position of Ceres and continuing clockwise every 30 degrees along the orbital plane.
Jupiter	Local Space (Newhome), Local Space (Olympus), Local Space (Vanguard Mountain)
Saturn	Local Space
Outer System	Local Space (Uranus), Local Space (Neptune), Local Space (Pluto/Charon)
Central Guild	None

▼ THE BOARD

The Board is a management agency, overseeing all the Houses and Divisions, formulating policy and coordinating the activities of the Guild as a whole. The massive Guild communications network is regulated directly by the Board, even though Central Tracking operates it. The Board should not be confused with the Board of Directors, a council of twelve Princes who, in addition to their House responsibilities, govern the entire Guild. While the Board of Directors is a part of the bureaucratic Board, the bureaucratic Board could not function without the Board of Directors. It is easiest to think of them as parts of the same body: the Board of Directors is the head, and the Board itself is everything from the neck down.

◇ PRINCES AT LARGE

Princes rotate in for a term on the Board of Directors every eight-eighty. Each term is set at two eight-eighties (about five Earth years) in length, but only half the Princes on the Board of Directors are replaced at any one given turnover. With thirty Princes, this gives each Prince the chance to serve on the Board of Directors every 12.5 Earth years. Princes may defer their Board time by swapping with another Prince, provided one is willing.

MERCHANT HOUSES ◀

The term **House** refers to a specific collection of personnel and assets. Houses are either the remains of the original Project New Earth shipping companies, or new groups that have petitioned for and received official recognition from the Guild. Houses maintain and operate the civilian fleets of the Guild, a job in which they are granted a small degree of autonomy. Outside of their obligations to the Guild, the Houses are left to run their own affairs; many have their own systems of rank and pay scales. It is not uncommon for Guilders to transfer between Houses, but many spend the majority of their careers in the service of a single House.

Very few Houses have the resources to operate a wide range of fleets and bases. Most have specialized their services into Transit Fleets, Dispatch Fleets or support bases. This specialization has left the Houses very dependent on each other; the sudden failure of one House will directly affect the fortunes of several others.

THE NEW ROYALTY ▣

A single individual heads each House. This leader not only governs the House, he is also directly responsible for how successful the House may be. House leaders have been compared to Renaissance-era merchant princes so many times that the term Prince is now more widely used than the proper title of Director of Assets. Princes receive their positions through Guild-wide elections, but once in, they hold their stations until they die or step down. If the Prince retires voluntarily, he (or she, for there have been an approximately equal number of female Princes) may nominate a successor. There is no guarantee this successor will be elected, but the Prince's choice does carry a great deal of weight. There is nothing wrong with naming one's own offspring as successors — the Beaufort family has run House Beaufort since the Guild was first created. The entire Guild votes on the issue, but the candidates with the best election chances usually come from the same family as the previous Prince.

THE DOMINATION GAME ▼

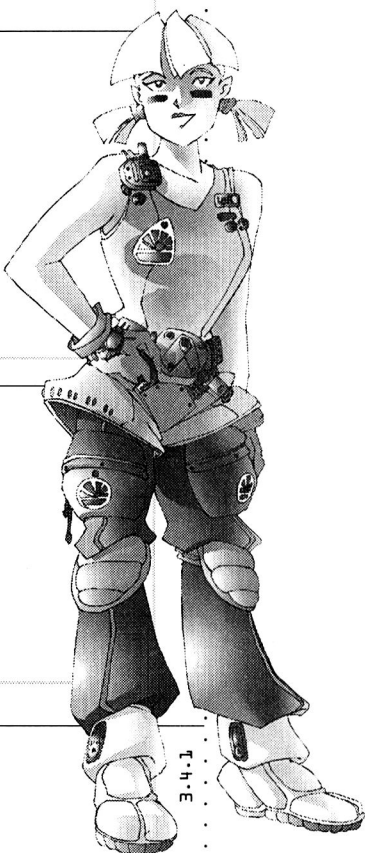
There are thirty Houses of varying sizes, and while each House operates within a designated set of Zones or Dispatches, it is quite common for territories of Houses to overlap. Each House must be able to survive as a business entity, despite the level of House interdependence. Territorial overlap inspires fierce competition for business within the shared region, although this competition is directed inward, through the Guild bureaucracy. While Mercurians would rarely stoop to the level of outright public bribery, Princes are constantly currying the favor of Logistics Division's Dispatch and Zone Coordinators in the hopes that their House freighters will receive first consideration should a large or lucrative cargo contract appear in the area. Regional Controllers know better than to start showing favoritism to specific Houses, as blatant favoritism would cost them their jobs. Instead, they play their preferences favor for favor, which sees some Houses getting better contracts, but still leaving openings where smaller Houses have a chance for a break.

OBLIGATIONS TO THE GUILD ▼

Houses are allowed to directly collect Guild revenue for cargo shipping and use it to pay for operating costs. A portion of this income must be turned over to the Logistics Division to help fund the rest of the Guild, specifically the non-House Divisions. The specific percentage owed varies, and is based off House assets — specifically ownership of dedicated support bases and stations. These assets are considered "infrastructure," and owning Houses are required to pay less to the Guild itself with the understanding that the remaining money will be put into maintaining these assets.

The Board monitors House accounting very carefully, and conducts routine audits. Generally, the Board does not care about specific House expenditures. The main purpose of the audits is to verify House income and ensure all the money owed to the rest of the Guild has been paid. Underpayment is a great shame for a House, and has forced Princes into early retirement.

The Houses are responsible for maintaining their assets, but Princes are required to surrender much of the actual control of those assets, which then falls to other areas of the Guild. The Logistics Division coordinates House fleets. The Board controls Guild apprenticeships and personnel assignment, and must approve all international facility rentals. The Security Corps monitors the legal aspects of the House's dealings, and is also responsible for law enforcement among House personnel. Within these restrictions, however, Houses find they still have a lot of room to maneuver.



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► HOUSE ELEMENTS

While some aspects of business are very dynamic, most Houses have seen little change in their core territories and responsibilities. This has made each House's combination of personnel and assets unique, although they can be categorized through some common characteristics. At the most basic level, Houses are loosely divided into two groups. Most fall under the heading of Trade House, as they are primarily oriented towards shipping, a few are Support Houses and provide the infrastructure to keep the Trade Houses operational.

▼ ADMINISTRATION

The bureaucratic structures of the Houses vary greatly. The older Houses generally follow the administrations set up by the original shipping companies, with some adjustments to allow those Houses to interact with the Board and other elements of Guild structure. It is unavoidable that the newer Houses will have more efficient bureaucracies, as they can create a system from scratch that will meet current Guild administrative needs. Overall, House administrations are small and focus on operational requirements. Security and Fleet deployment are external — no House has the means to coordinate anything more than their own auxiliary fleets, so they generally rely on Central Tracking. All administrations answer to the Board, although the Board generally lets them manage their own affairs unless some truly horrendous problem arises.

▼ HUMAN RESOURCES

Recruits are given job opportunities based on the results of aptitude tests and their performance during Guild basic training, and are sent to whichever location is most in need of their particular skills. As the Houses comprise the largest portion of the Guild, they get the most recruits. Assignment is based entirely on demand. Some families can exert some influence over recruit placement through calling in favors, but generally don't use methods as direct as bribery. Houses have separate personnel divisions, and are responsible for ensuring that their people are properly qualified as well as coordinating crew content on their ships. Houses keep internal medical staffs, including counselors, to provide for personnel well being. Payroll comes from House revenues, although Guild-wide bonuses have been issued during exceptionally good years. Should a Guilder wish to transfer Houses, all negotiations are made through the Board to ensure impartiality.

▼ HOUSE FLEETS

With the exception of the ships of the Security and ESR Fleets, the Houses own all the Guild vessels. The actual numbers of craft owned differs between Houses, and depends on the focus, resources and prosperity of a particular House. All Houses, whether Trade or Support, have some stake in the Dispatch Fleets — only the four most powerful Trade Houses own Transit Fleet ships and only the Support Houses own stations and bases outside of local Mercurian space. Each House also maintains a small auxiliary fleet that does not fall under the control of the Logistics Division. These fleets are designated for the private transportation of House passengers or cargo, or for carrying out business that has no impact on the Guild as a whole. The fleets are small in size, consisting of roughly a dozen vessels, typically small freighters and quickships. Should a House have need for a large number of ships for internal use, it can request vessels from Logistics.

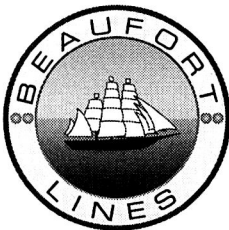
▼ SHARED TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Houses are self-sufficient to a point, and support the routine maintenance requirements of all their vessels and facilities. More involved repairs become correspondingly more expensive, both in the work and maintaining the facilities. Seven of the Houses specialize in technical support to varying degrees, taking on the responsibility of maintaining Guild assets and leaving the remaining Houses free to transport cargo. Support Houses operate facilities across the System, ranging from permanent Guild stations down to rented machine shops in bases. These Houses are paid an allowance by the Guild to help cover costs, and to make up for the fact that Support Houses can't generate as much profit as a Trade House. This allowance comes with a condition: Support Houses serve all Guild vessels, regardless of the current state of inter-House politics.

The Support Houses have carefully coordinated their respective territories to ensure that none overlap. Unlike the Trade Houses, the Support Houses gain no immediate benefit from competing with each other. However, some Support Houses operate facilities across several dispatches, ensuring a somewhat equal share of the heavy traffic areas. The remaining Support Houses have found it easier to operate from single regions, and concentrate their assets within one Dispatch.

BEAUFORT HOUSE ◀

Beaufort House is not only one of the founding members of the Guild, it is also one of the most powerful. A series of strong leaders has practically assured the House's financial success; only a major disaster could affect its fortunes at this point. The House makes only part of its money from transporting cargo. Some of its assets have been oriented towards the lucrative water trade, shipping water not only to Mercury, but to several isolated stations in the Belt and inner Solar System as well.



PROFILE: LISE BEAUFORT ◇

Beaufort House has remained in the hands of the Beaufort family for three generations — Lise is the direct descendent of Samiel Beaufort, the first Prince of the House. She is young, charismatic and has a good head for business. She became a Prince two eight-eighties ago after her mother died from a stroke. There was some concern about her experience and age (she is only in her mid-thirties) but she has held her own quite well against the other Princes. Lise makes frequent use of her grandfather's Delphin to make personal visits to House ships and bases.

HISTORY ▼

Before the Guild rose to power, the House was known simply as Beaufort Lines, one of several large shipping companies contracted for Project New Earth. The company had a large fleet of tankers, and was put to work hauling water from the Belt. New Earth tied up all of the company's assets, which was a fortunate occurrence — when the Fall came in the 2080s, the vessels were safely out of reach of the desperate Earth government. After the Water Rebellion, Beaufort Lines became one of the driving forces behind the formation of the Merchant Guild. Shortly after retiring as Prince, Samiel Beaufort served several terms as Administrator, bringing Mercury into the close relationship it shared with the Guild until recently. Beaufort House continued to work in the Belt to ensure a supply of water to Mercury. The House also created a local shipping network, connecting nearby Nomad homesteads with trade centers established on the processing stations.

CURRENT CONCERNS ▼

Lise Beaufort is not worried about a trade war with the Clan Lysenko Nomads in the Belt, as most of the House endeavors are focused on volatiles prospecting. What trade the House conducts is with Nomad Clans who would never trust cargo to the Lysenkos. She is, however, worried about the Venusian presence in the Belt, particularly at the rate it seems to have grown in the last few years. Venus-backed miners have been harassing the House's Nomad prospectors, and have even picked fights with the Guild itself over a few claims. Fortunately there have been no major incidents as of yet; Venus has always backed off when the Guild threatens to involve the United Space Nations. Nevertheless, Lise has been pushing for an expanded Security Corps presence around Beaufort House operations.

ASSETS ▼

Fleets	Transit	Water Fleet – 250 magsail tankers, Magsail Fleet – 400 magsail freighters, Fast Transport – 200 freighters
	Belt Dispatch	Transport – 200, Volatiles Prospecting/Refining – 75
Bases	Belt Dispatch	Ceres (Regional Head Office – Temporary), Brunswick Station*, St. John's Station*, 3 regional offices in the 1 O'clock and 2 O'clock Zones.

*Shipyard facilities operated by Mersy House (Support)

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► 3.7 RAYNE HOUSE



Rayne House is Beaufort House's main rival. The competition is not friendly, thanks to a 90-year old dispute over House assets, but the enmity is kept so low-key that only the Mercurians know of it. Like Beaufort House, Rayne operates a contingent of magsail water tankers, but most of its Transit Fleet is dedicated to hauling commercial cargo between worlds. The House has a presence in both the Belt and Earth Dispatches, although Earth space is the focus of its business.

◇ PROFILE: ASURA KUMARA

Asura Kumara has been at the helm of Rayne House for over twenty years. She is willful, stubborn and egotistical, ruling her House with an iron hand. She is not a favorite with the other Princes, but she has earned their respect — albeit grudgingly — for her ability to deconstruct complicated problems and find effective solutions. Kumara has served only one term on the Board of Directors, and most of that time was spent arguing with the other Princes.

▼ HISTORY

Rayne House began life as New Earth Shipping, a company put together by the backers of Project New Earth to transport materials and personnel from Earth to Venus and Mercury. The company suffered greatly during the Fall when the increasingly desperate Earth governments seized most of its assets. Contact was lost with its head office in Denmark before vital company records could be transported off-planet. For the next forty years, New Earth Shipping eked out a living as one of the fleets making the Venus-Mercury run. When the Water Rebellion erupted in armed conflict, the company tried to maintain a neutral stance, but its fleet split as individual captains declared for either Mercury or Venus. New Earth Shipping was again left to rebuild. Company President Janice Rayne negotiated a deal with Samiel Beaufort to borrow a dozen solar sail barges until the company got back on its feet. The barges were never returned, sparking off the two Houses' long-standing antagonism.

▼ CURRENT CONCERNS

Profits have taken a big hit over the past six months. Rayne House has born the brunt of CEGA's anger over the suggestion of the Jovian-Mercurian partnership, and while Kumara has had the full backing of the Merchant Guild, making amends has been a very painful process. The looming trade war in the Belt with Clan Lysenko is unlikely to cause any major damage to the House overall, but it could hurt the fledgling Dispatch Fleet she has been nurturing in that area. The most frustrating part of it all stems from the fact that these incidents are completely out of Kumara's control; all she can do is try to stay the course and weather out the coming storm. On a positive note, Kumara has quietly negotiated an expanded transport agreement with some of the non-CEGA Earth governments. The extra income will help offset the recent losses, assuming CEGA does not demand the contract be scrapped as part of the Guild's "apology."

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▼ ASSETS

Fleets	Transit	Water Fleet - 50 magsail tankers, Magsail Fleet - 120 freighters, Solar Sail Fleet - 260 freighters, Fast Transport - 75 freighters
	Earth Dispatch	250 freighters
	Belt Dispatch	30 freighters
Bases	Earth Dispatch	Cairo Station* (Lunar orbit, Regional Head Office), 3 Orbital Regional Offices, 2 CEGA Regional Offices, 1 non-CEGA Regional Office
	Belt Dispatch	Regional Head Office** and 3 local offices in the 11 O'clock Zone

*Shipyard facilities operated by Weser House (Support)

**Space rented on Cheswick Station, owned by Mersy House (Support)

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The Guild, however, is letting Tidswell House expand operations into quieter areas to provide some stability to House income. Aldinach has been trying to secure port facilities in several locations around the Solar System; he would prefer to be in the Belt due to its close proximity, but so far the best he has been able to do is obtain space in a lunar orbital facility.

Fleets	Earth Dispatch	15 freighters
	Mars Dispatch	75 freighters
Bases	Earth Dispatch	Regional Head Office*
	Mars Dispatch	Venezia Station** (Regional Head Office), 4 Regional Offices in each of the Republic and Federation Zones

**Shipyard facilities operated by Mersy House (Support). Remaining 5 Martian Guild stations owned by other Houses.

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► LOGISTICS

The Logistics Division coordinates ship movement and cargo transportation across the entire Solar System. At any point, Logistics can provide the disposition of specific cargo holds on any given Guild freighter anywhere. Logistics has no ships of its own; it uses the vessels of various House fleets to meet the needs of commercial shipping contracts. Logistics also operates as the Guild's quartermaster for all the Divisions. Houses maintain their own separate supply of materials, but they are permitted to dip into the Logistics stockpile should their own resources run low. This is not a free service — Houses are expected to replace any materials used. The Board also draws on Logistics staff and resources to help keep track of Guild finances.

▼ ORGANIZATION

Logistics was the Guild's first separate division, created when it became apparent the Houses could not cooperatively coordinate system-wide fleet deployment or cargo transport. Logistics answers directly to the Board. It is subdivided by Dispatch and Zone, and in most cases coordinates fleets locally from command centers located within each region. The Security Corps maintain a separate section of Logistics to direct the allocation of ships to transport escort and anti-piracy duties. All cargo requests and civilian fleet movements are evaluated by Logistics to determine which freighters are in the best positions to take on cargo. Shipping requests, or "tickets," are allocated according to specific freighters arranged in a priority order based on location, destination, current status and cargo space. Tickets are transmitted directly to the freighters.

Captains may refuse a ticket unless they are either the last freighter in priority or the only freighter in range. If a freighter has less than a full load, the captain may be given permission to take "open tickets," directly soliciting for extra cargo at the port. Open ticket cargo manifests must still be cleared through the nearest Logistics office, however. Only the Transit Fleets are not controlled locally. Those assets are allocated under the Central Guild Dispatch, and are coordinated from a facility located on Mercury. The Transit Fleets form the basis of the transportation scheduling system. Dispatch traffic must be routed based on the movements of the sailbarges; any delays could leave trade stations empty and dozens of freighters without cargo.

▼ PERSONNEL

Logistics staff fall into one of three groups. The first is made up of Coordinators, those in charge of fleet deployment. The second group consists of all the laborers, the longshores and warehouse workers who move, store or load cargo. The third group is by far the largest, and includes a small army of quartermasters, accountants and shipping clerks. This division also supports a large number of Mercurians on National Service Requirements, though most are stationed in Mercurian local space.

▼ CURRENT CONCERNS

This Division is central to the success of the Guild, and out of respect for its importance it tries to stay as far away from politics of any sort as possible, whether it be the inter-House rivalries or the current troubles between the Guild and the Administration. This is the official policy, at any rate. Unofficially, Dispatch and Zone Coordinators find themselves receiving the attentions of the Houses who own freighters under the Coordinators' control. These attentions are not bribes; they are very subtle favors made in the hopes that, should a ticket priority involving that House be somewhat unclear, the Coordinator might possibly remember the House in a slightly better light than the others involved. The interplay between House and Coordinator is extremely restrained. Foreigners would find the process laughable, considering the small size of the favors being offered. Security audits overlook the exchanges unless there is evidence of blatant bribery.

▣ PASSING THE BUCK

The Merchant Guild claims that, as a neutral shipping company, it transports all cargo equally without inquiring too closely as to the contents. This claim is patently untrue. The Guild is acutely aware of the identity and provenance of every item loaded into a cargo bay, although in most cases the organization will play dumb both to maintain the confidence of the customers and to claim ignorance if any problems arise. There are few cargos the Guild will not carry, namely items that violate the Edicts along with weapons of mass destruction. The Guild has, however, refused to accept cargo if it cannot find out the contents. If the Guild does not take it, there is little a potential customer can do to inspire a change of mind. Generally, the customer is left with no alternative but to find another, much more expensive, way to move his cargo.

CENTRAL TRACKING ◀

Central Tracking monitors the positions of vessels (Guild or otherwise) throughout the solar system. It is not a traffic control agency; the coordination of flight patterns is one of the responsibilities of the Logistics Division. Central Tracking is the eye of the Guild, providing all the necessary data to allow Logistics and the Security Corps to manage their far-flung assets. Central Tracking has regional offices, but only on the Dispatch level, and only in facilities owned by Mercury. Data is supplied to Central Tracking from almost every source available, including public flight records, Guild freighter and station scanner records and even visual sightings. Information is collated at the nearest Dispatch office and sent to local Logistics control centers as well as to the Central Tracking offices on Mercury. Unclassified data is available to anyone in the Guild. Classified data is available only to the Board, the Security Corps and a few others who "need to know."



ORGANIZATION ▼

As it is a separate Division, Central Tracking answers to the Board, but its operations are influenced by requests from Logistics and Guild Security. The Division is divided into smaller groups, each of which is responsible for monitoring a different sort of traffic.

Group	Responsibility
Mercurian Tracking	Monitors all Guild and civilian Mercurian traffic
Foreign Tracking	Monitors all non-Mercurian civilian traffic
Military Tracking	Monitors Guild Security Corps and national Navy vessels
Intelligence Tracking	Monitors all foreign military traffic

Each group is subdivided into Dispatches and Zones. A fifth group, Synchronization, is responsible for coordinating the data brought in by all groups except Intelligence Tracking. The IT group takes Synchronization's data and applies the classified elements it collects. Military and Intelligence Tracking technically fall under the purview of the Security Corps, and are generally classified. The Corps shares Military Tracking information to allow Logistics to coordinate armed escorts for convoys. Intelligence Tracking data is shared only if the group is tracking targets that present direct threats to Guild assets.

PERSONNEL ▼

This Division comprises almost entirely highly trained sensor operators, drawn from all areas of the Guild. Operators must be able to demonstrate an intimate knowledge of their assigned Zone before they are accepted into the job. There is also an administrative staff and a small cadre of electronics technicians for support. The Security Corps supplies its own staff for the Military and Intelligence Tracking groups, and keeps staff members completely segregated except for a few designated liaisons.

CURRENT CONCERNS ▼

The wide distribution of Guild assets gives Central Tracking eyes across most of the Solar System. The sheer volume of information collected surpasses that compiled by any other dedicated intelligence agency. This has made Central Tracking a constant target for hackers and covert operations teams. The Division has the best security the Guild can provide, but it is an endless race to stay ahead of the game. Several recent hacking attempts, though not successful, have been disturbingly effective at slipping past defenses. Central Tracking has tightened access to its information to a constrictive degree. Logistics has the freest access, although it must follow fiendish security protocols. All users external to the Guild, including Corvus, have been placed on a "need-to-know" status. This has upset more than a few analysts at the civilian counter-intelligence agency, even though it has not greatly reduced Corvus' access to Guild information.

OMNIPOTENCE? ▣

The information collected by Central Tracking, when collated and coupled with data provided by the Logistics Division, allows the Merchant Guild to accurately plot macro-scale supply and demand trends on an unprecedented scale. The Guild's financial success is a direct benefit of this tracking. Many of the infiltration attempts made against Central Tracking, Logistics and the Guild itself are not after military intelligence; operatives are targeting the market plotting databases, even a small portion of which could give a powerful edge. Solapol is very aware of the potential dangers posed by Guild information falling into the wrong hands. Fortunately, there has been only one other instance where Guild data security has been successfully cracked, but the thieves were caught before they left Mercurian space.

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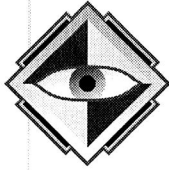
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HISTORICAL NOTE:
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► THE SECURITY CORPS



The Security Corps is the one exception to the rule: contrary to Guild policy, the Security Corps is armed, aggressive and definitely not neutral when it comes to dealing with threats. The Corps is comprised of the former security forces of the Houses, centralized to ensure a consistent capability. The Security Corps has several major functions: it is an anti-piracy force, an internal police force, judicial system and also the Guild's international legal division. As a military force, it is well below the level maintained by any other foreign power save the Nomads, but it was never intended to fight large-scale military engagements. It is a deterrent, and despite its martial capabilities works best on a psychological level. On the other hand, the Security Corps is much more capable of dealing with armed threats than the current Mercurian military.

▼ ORGANIZATION

3.11.1

As a separate Division, the Security Corps answers directly to the Board. The Division is broken down like the rest, into Dispatches and Zones. There are numerous Security Corps groups working within areas of other Divisions, such as Central Tracking. These smaller groups are still under the command of the Corps regardless of their actual jobs. The Security Corps has three main branches. The **Law Enforcement** branch functions as the Guild's internal police as well as shipboard security. They have full arrest powers on Guild property only, although in many instances they have received permission from the Administration to work officially in civilian Mercurian territory. Law Enforcement does not operate beyond Guild boundaries.

The **Legal** branch is the Guild's law department. A large cadre of lawyers handles all legal issues arising with external clients as well as acting as counsel for the Guild's internal judicial system. Judge Advocates are usually chosen from a pool of senior Guild members from several areas, not just the Corps. **Threat Response** is the para-military branch, charged with protecting Guild assets from armed aggressors. Officially, Threat Response is equipped with a wide variety of older corvettes, fighters and exo-suits, as well as the newer Brimstone exo-armors. Deployment is restricted, and includes only Mars local space and areas of the Belt.

▼ PERSONNEL

3.11.2

The Corps requires a wide range of enlisted personnel, including administrators, soldiers and lawyers. Security aptitude tests are part of Guild basic training, and new entries are watched very closely. Mercurians showing promise are strongly encouraged to re-enlist; those who do are promptly transferred to the nearest Security Corps facility for an eight-eighty of advanced training. All who complete this training successfully are Bonded as Guilders. Most Corps Guilders serve in the Law Enforcement branch as ship or station security. There are advanced positions, which are roughly the equivalent to police detectives — these officers deal with major crimes such as fraud, theft and murder. The most promising officers in Law Enforcement eventually have the opportunity to enroll in Threat Response. Those accepted face yet more training, and must commit to serving for two eight-eighties on active deployment, usually in the Belt or Mars. The Guild offers law degrees through the Security Corps and covers all costs, provided the prospective lawyer passes his exams and agrees to serve five eight-eighties upon graduation. The Security Corps requires all of its personnel to complete the basic and advanced security courses. This has given rise to an unusual statistic: out of all the solar nations, Mercury has the highest number of lawyers who are trained to kill people.

▼ CURRENT CONCERNS

3.11.3

The Guild is slowly loosening the leash on Threat Response, bringing its capabilities up to a more modern level. Mercury has purchased a number of older Jovian exo-armors, similar to those owned by Mars. Despite the negative reaction to the rumored Mercury-Jovian agreement, the Guild plans to go ahead with deploying the newly purchased exo-armors in the Belt by mid-2214. The Corps has also been acquiring standard military units to a far greater degree than most foreign governments suspect.

◇ THE MERCHANT MARINES

The Security Corps has created an elite cadre of combat soldiers. Members of this unit are not put on regular escort duties or harbor work. Instead, they are stationed aboard two Guild-owned Seraphim and trained on advanced versions of Hellhounds and Brimstones. Great care is taken to ensure the Guild vessels closely resemble national Navy ships. The reason behind the creation of this unit is unclear, but its use will undoubtedly signal the end of Mercurian neutrality.

EMERGENCY SEARCH AND RESCUE ◀

The ‘space rescue’ division of the Guild is also the newest division, having been created in 2211 as part of a UN mandate for each member nation to provide greater support to the Solar Cross in an attempt to turn it into a viable stellar organization instead of a small collection of hospital ships. Most solar nations simply contributed money. CEGA, in a surprisingly magnanimous gesture, offered the use of several orbital dock facilities. Mercury took things one step further, and created a division to supplement the Solar Cross.

The original plan involved turning all administrative functions over to the Solar Cross. The Guild would continue to supply crews and pay for the fleet’s upkeep. The Guild’s investment of time and money, however, has grown far beyond the intended allocation. The Guild has now decided to hang on to the ESR, and instead set up a liaison with the Solar Cross in order to coordinate efforts. The biggest boost to the Solar Cross’s independence has now become the largest hit to its autonomy. The Guild has issued many reassurances of cooperation, but the Solar Cross is concerned that the other nations may decide to set up their own organizations rather than be forced to work with egotistical Mercurians on yet another endeavor.

ORGANIZATION ▼

The Division is broken down by Dispatches and Zones, although assets are usually assigned to stations near well-traveled shipping lanes. The primary deployment area is the Belt, where ships are kept on standby at Guild facilities. Most calls to date have involved Nomad vessels attacked by pirates. The second highest deployment is around Mercury itself, followed closely by Earth Orbital space. Currently the ESR is treated as a Division. There are some suggestions that it should be reclassified as a fleet and controlled by Logistics, but until the troubles with the Administration are resolved, the ESR will stay as it is.

PERSONNEL ▼

This is probably one of the most open divisions of the Guild. As the name suggests, it is a cadre of emergency specialists trained to deal with dangerous situations in a microgravity or space environment. Specialists are proficient in medical procedures, but each vessel also carries a proper doctor. The ESR works closely in conjunction with the Solar Cross and other national aid agencies, and accepts rescue specialist trainees from all over the solar system. Actual vessel crew positions, however, are restricted to Bonded Guilders. The Division has a small core of administrative staff, but little else outside the crews assigned to the vessels. The ESR must rely on House support assets for maintenance and technical upkeep, though the shipboard technicians are skilled enough to conduct most of the tech work themselves if given the proper materials.

CURRENT CONCERNS ▼

The struggles over the fate of the ESR have not affected Division morale in a positive way. The decision by the Guild to hang on to the ESR has left most of the non-Guild personnel wondering just what their purpose is within the ESR, especially considering they have little chance of career advancement if they stay. The Administration’s attempt to take control of the ESR has also left most Guild personnel anxious about their fates should the Division become a national Mercurian agency. The ESR has not had a warm international welcome, especially from CEGA and Venus, who see the group as motivated by anything but goodwill. They ridicule the Guild for fielding a humanitarian agency when the Guild itself has a hideous humanitarian record from its blind adherence to its policy of neutrality. Military vessels in distress have refused to allow ESR vessels to dock — one CEGA corvette went so far as to fire warning shots.

RESCUING THE RESCUERS ▣

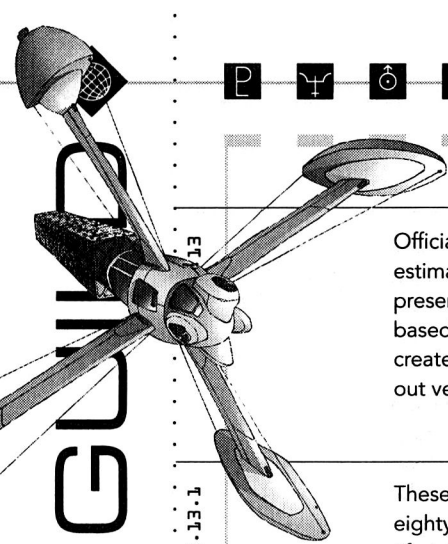
Deep space rescues are an extremely hazardous undertaking. Provided a vessel in distress can even be reached, emergency workers must face a hellish environment of floating debris, obstructions and the potential for exposure to fire, radiation or harmful chemicals. The ESR was never intended to be a stand-alone operation. Their ships are far too small to function as hospitals, evacuation centers or even adequate triage units. It was originally expected that vessels would be deployed along with support ships to handle the wounded. Plans also included pairing up ESR ships with local rescue assets to provide backup should an emergency vessel become damaged itself. However, the Guild has no rescue support assets or hospital ships. By retaining the ESR, the Guild has effectively placed its emergency crews at greater risk, as the ESR is now operating without backup. Should anything happen, ESR crews are very much on their own.

3.12.1

3.12.2

3.12.3

HISTORICAL NOTE:
end of section 3.12 search and rescue



► THE FLEETS

Official Guild sources place the number of ships under Guild control at approximately 5000. Independent estimates suggest actual numbers are probably higher; it is not uncommon for the Guild to downplay its presence, particularly in politically sensitive areas of space. Commercial vessels are separated into fleets based on operating region. Each fleet is further broken down into convoys, but each convoy is unique, created as needed from whatever vessels are available. Ships can be reassigned between fleets, but loaning out vessels involves a lot of paperwork and is generally avoided.

▼ TRANSIT FLEETS

These fleets are the core of the Guild, providing interplanetary transport for cargo and passengers. Roughly eighty percent of the Transit Fleets consist of solar sails or magsail barges. The other twenty percent covers "fast transports," smaller freighters with conventional drives, higher operating costs, but shorter delivery times. Travel times for most of the Transit Fleets vary considerably. A solar sail departing Mercury will take a little over eight and a half months to reach Mars; a magsail requires about three months to cover the same distance. The **Mechanical Catalog Two**, page 29, contains a complete listing of travel times.

There are four Transit Fleets, grouped according to general function: solar sail, magsail, fast transport and water. The last fleet consists entirely of the largest magsail tankers Mercury can field. Water is shipped almost exclusively for Mercury, although a small percentage is sold to private interests and isolated stations. All Transit Fleets are part of the Central Dispatch and coordinated system-wide from Mercury.

■ CLOTHED IN HISTORY

The slow, majestic solar sailing vessels are an allegory of humanity's golden age of exploration, representing the best combination of courage, daring and indomitable curiosity. The Guild plays heavily on this imagery, using its Transit Fleets as icons of success and commercial prosperity. Crew morale is high even despite the repeated lengthy voyages. They take a great deal of pride in their heritage, and they play their parts in the Guild symbolism to the fullest.

▼ DISPATCH FLEETS

As the name indicates, these fleets operate within specified Dispatches. Fleet vessels are based at Transit Fleet ports, and are used on relatively short-range routes to drop off and pick up cargo. All Dispatch vessels use conventional hydrogen-powered engines. Ships rarely leave Dispatch areas, and some do not often travel beyond their home port Zones. Dispatch Fleets consist of a wide range of vessels, from large barges and transports right down to quickships. Station-based cargo transfer craft are considered to be part of the respective House fleet. Generally, the local governments allow the Guild to bring in however many ships it needs. Some areas, however — most notably Venus and Jupiter — have restricted the size of the Guild's local Dispatch Fleet. This has forced those seeking transport to rely on either the smaller, national merchant fleets or whatever other independent ships may be available.

▼ SUPPORT ASSETS

Support Houses try to place their assets in Guild-owned stations as much as possible. Where rental of space in non-Guild facilities is unavoidable, it is usually limited to the necessities of cargo handling: berthing space, warehousing and possibly office space. Maintenance and shipyard services are never rented from outside sources unless the need is dire. The Guild maintains a network of Yggdrasil-Class stations throughout the Solar System. Some of the stations have been converted to repair docks by attaching shipyard modules to the end of the cargo section. There are private Guild facilities in every Dispatch with the exceptions of Venus, Saturn and the Outer System. In those areas the Guild is forced to rent facilities to conduct business. CEGA has restricted the number of Guild stations in Earth space to three, and none are permitted to actually orbit the Earth. The Guild has received "embassy status" from all solar nations, meaning that all facilities, whether private or rented, are considered part of the Mercurian state and not subject to local laws.

THE SECURITY FLEET ▼

Vessels belonging to the Security Corps and Emergency Search and Rescue are each grouped into fleets separate from those used for commercial shipping. The Security Fleet uses Dispatches and Zones as patrol regions, with ships being assigned based on historical and current threat assessments provided by Corps evaluators. Ship deployments within a region are coordinated with commercial vessel travel plans, although security vessels are actually controlled from Security Corps elements within Logistics.

The primary function of the Security Fleet is anti-piracy patrol. This usually involves making sure all convoys are properly protected. There have been instances of security vessels making pre-emptive strikes against pirate operations, but these are tricky undertakings, especially when trying to distinguish the pirates from local Nomad inhabitants.

The Security Fleet includes much more than vessels. It also covers exo-armors and squadrons of exo-suits, deployed through hangar modules carried on freighters. The hangar modules are the same size as standard cargo containers, and can be easily attached to any standard Guild support pylon. More than half the Security Fleet vessels consist of Erel-Class Corvettes; these ships are the primary escort vessels for Transit Fleets, with one or two assigned to each convoy. Dispatch convoys carry only hangar modules as protection, unless they are operating in a high-risk situation. Hangar modules are not permitted in the Venus, Earth and Jupiter Dispatches; escorts, if needed, are provided by the local militaries, but are greatly dependent on escort vessel availability.

BLACK SAILS ▣

The *Black Sail Fleet* is a poetic reference to Mercury's military solar sail vessels. All the military sail ships are equipped with dual-sided sails, one side covered with a black material designed to minimize the "push" from photons, allowing the vessels to keep station without actually furling the sails. The black material also reduces the sail's visual signature. Most of the military solar sailers have since been refitted with magsails, but the name remains in use.

THE RESCUE FLEET ▼

Like the Security Fleet, the Rescue Fleet also uses Dispatches to delineate patrol zones. The success of the ESR depends on a short response time. Vessels are deployed along trade routes at major stations in the hopes that this will put ships near potential disaster sites. This has not pleased many station commanders, who believe people will interpret the presence of ESR ships as an indication that the station is unsafe.

Over half the vessels are concentrated in the Belt, deployed at various independent trade stations and Guild facilities. ESR crews based in this Dispatch make regular patrols of known Nomad communities, offering help and medical assistance to any in need. The Guild has quietly boosted the defensive capabilities of ESR ships in the Belt after several rescue vessels were captured by pirates masquerading as vessels in distress.

Other high areas of deployment include Earth (specifically the Orbital colonies) and Mercury itself. The conditions in local Mercurian space are considered hazardous enough, particularly on Mercury's sunlit side, to warrant stationing several vessels at the major colonial ports. The ESR does not maintain vessels in the Outer System Dispatch, and has not been allowed to deploy vessels around Venus or Saturn. The Jovian government is letting each member state decide whether or not to allow the ESR to establish a presence. So far, only Vanguard Mountain has decided to admit the ESR, but even they have restricted the Mercurians to a limited deployment for "evaluation purposes."

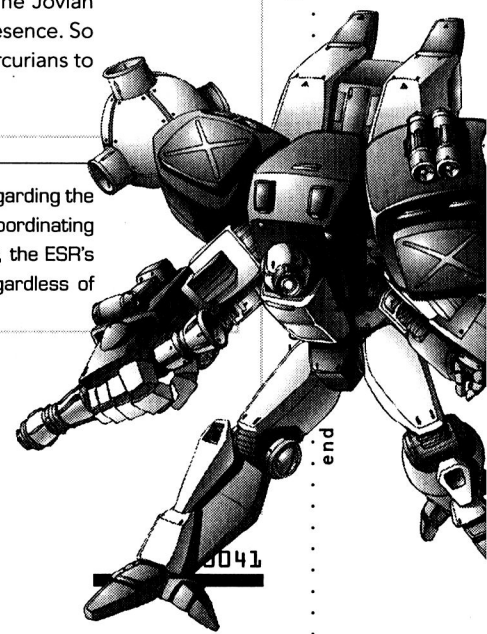
THE SOLAR CRUTCH ▣

The Guild is extremely aware of the risks involved in operating the ESR without proper support, not only regarding the rescue crews, but also the potential loss of face to the ESR were a fatal incident to occur. Logistics is coordinating ESR deployment according to the movements of Solar Cross vessels, especially hospital ships; however, the ESR's limited numbers have resulted in rescue ships being pulled out of "safer" Dispatches and Zones, regardless of whether those regions have any other emergency services available.

HIST-E

HISTORICAL NOTE:

5-ET-E



end



► MERCHANT CREWS

The Guild boasts that it has a million people in space. Considering the amount of people Mercury ships out each year for the National Service Requirements, this number might be a bit understated. By far the largest percentage, regardless of House or Division, end up assigned to the Guild's far-ranging freighter fleet. These crews form the foundation of the Guild, and are responsible for keeping the entire organization afloat.

▼ 3.14.1 CREW ROLES

The amount of work required to maintain a vessel is staggering. Most Guild crews — particularly those on military ships — are considered to be on duty continuously for the duration of the voyage. Even when not on watch, they may find themselves handed extra jobs to fill their time. If a ship is large enough, crews are divided into specialized departments, but this is not practical on smaller vessels, where crews must function as all-purpose generalists. The following is a list of some of the common job titles and duties found on Guild vessels. The job title is combined with a rank name to form a proper address. For example, the head of a gunnery team is called a Gunner's Lead, and the section chief of engineering is called Master of the Drives.

Title	Responsibilities
Armorer	Maintains ship's weapons locker, and any arms and armor therein
Cook	Prepares food
Doctor	Crew health, can function as surgeon if required
Gunner	Operates and maintains ship's weapons
Helm	Controls ship maneuvering according to plotted navigation
Longshore	Cargo Officer; Loads and offloads cargo, negotiates Open Tickets if required
Medic	Generally functions as a nurse, tends to crew health and provides first aid
Pilot	Navigation; plots and lays in courses, calculates ship's position
Quartermaster	Maintains ship's stores, including food and life support. Also handles crew pay
Signals	Communications; directs messages, performs encrypting
Steward	Passenger comfort, also includes first aid during damage control situations
Tech, Drives	Maintains reaction drives, maneuvering thrusters and apogee motors
Tech, General	Maintains shipboard systems, includes general damage control
Tech, Mechanician	Maintains mechanical and hydraulic systems, includes general damage control
Tech, Seni	Operates and maintains sensors (stands for SEnsor Navigation and Imaging)
Tech, Stoker	Operates and maintains fuel containment and delivery systems, includes nuclear material
Tech, Tops	Operates and maintains solar sails and/or magsails

▼ THE MONEY SITUATION

Each Guild vessel carries a supply of funds to deal with expenses such as maintenance costs, refueling fees, berthing and so on. Crew wages are handled separately from ship's funds, as salary payment is not an actual money transfer. Instead, the Mercurian Merchant Credit Union sets up shipboard accounts that automatically increment each week by the amount of the salary. A matching account at the MMCU head office also increments, with synchronicity checks performed periodically. The Guild offers crews a portion of their vessel's profits on top of a regular salary, divided into equal portions called "shares," with the value of each share depending on the total number of shares on board ship. Captains get two shares, Unbonded members get a half share each and Bonded crew get a full share, rewarded at the end of a run. Bonuses are rewards for outstanding performance, and are issued at the discretion of the House that owns the freighter. There are no hard and fast rules, except that crews are not automatically entitled to a bonus. The size of a bonus is determined by a balance of the vessel's net profit, the House's fiscal performance and a certain amount of good will. They may be issued based on annual performance, or as a reward for a specific accomplishment.

◇ POLICY NOTE: SPECULATIVE TRADING

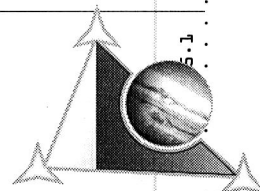
Merchant Guild crews are not allowed to engage in speculative trading. It is considered grossly unfair, plus a violation of Guild neutrality to take advantage of an enhanced knowledge of system-wide supply and demand. This does not mean the Guild itself avoids making a profit in this way — far from it — but the Guild would prefer to avoid the difficulties associated with its members making large amounts of money every time they docked. As such, crews are required to strictly adhere to the tickets issued by Logistics.

COMPETITION ◀

Several solar nations have formed local merchant associations intended to subsidize neighborhood traders and keep them viable and competitive against the Guild. Most are loose affiliations offering some centralized cargo booking and tracking facilities, though some larger collectives also offer legal services and health plans. A few have grown large enough to directly rival the Guild in terms of capability (although only in local space). In most cases, these associations have been very effective at making the Guild work for its profit.

JOVIAN HANSEA ▼

The Hansea is not a guild. Rather, it is more of an association for Jovian Confederacy merchants. Memberships are purchased for individual vessels, and there is only one requirement to join: the ship must be registered to a port somewhere in the Confederacy. Membership provides lower docking fees and free access to some medical programs and maintenance facilities. Fees consist of an initial membership expense of 5000 credits and an annual maintenance charge of 500 credits. Memberships are purchased for entire vessels, with crews becoming *de facto* members while they serve onboard Hansea ships. The Hansea is extremely popular with local merchants. Roughly 80% of the commercial vessels registered to the Confederacy also carry a Hansea membership, which has served to lock the Guild out of most local traffic. The Guild still provides valuable interplanetary transport to the Confederacy, and due to the long travel time between Jupiter and the inner solar system, the Hansea is unlikely to challenge the Guild outside of Jovian space.

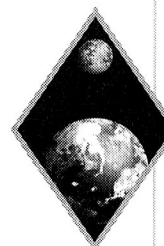


3.15.3

3.15.1

TERRAN MERCANTILE LEAGUE ▼

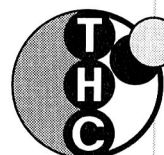
CEGA's version of the Hansea, the Terran Mercantile League, or "T-Merc," is one of the most open support organizations. Members can be from any part of CEGA, including the orbital colonies and the Moon. Membership fees run 900 credits a year, but include priority consideration for cargo berths and drydock space. There has been some talk about subsidizing fuel costs as well, though that will undoubtedly be protested as an unfair trade advantage by other solar nations. Unlike the Hansea, memberships are purchased individually, allowing crewmates to take advantages of T-Merc perks no matter where they may be serving. The T-Merc has been less successful at dominating local traffic. Only 60% of the cargo ships in Earth space are registered, although the T-Merc claims 100% of CEGA's orbit-to-surface shuttles. The T-Merc also has a single facility in orbit around Mars, rented on one of the local Martian stations. Though the place is quite busy, the Guild has taken steps to ensure this is the only foreign facility the T-Merc will ever possess.



3.15.2

TITANIAN HYDROCARBON CORPORATION ▼

Titan is effectively a corporate-run city-state, and as such is very effective at controlling its region of space. Technically the Saturn system is international property, but the heavy pirate attacks aimed at THC transports for the past few years have allowed the Corporate Security Division to shut down local space to all but THC traffic. The Guild serviced the Corporation until 2187, when a dispute over shipping rates resulted in the cancellation of THC contracts. It is generally felt by the Guild that the THC completely fails to appreciate the requirements of shipping materials to and from Saturn. The distant planet is out of range of the Guild's magsail transports, which forced the Guild to maintain a fleet of long-range freighters specifically for the Saturn route. The THC has since constructed its own transport fleet, which can reach the inner solar system without Guild help. The Guild has repeatedly offered its assistance and expertise to the inexperienced THC fleet, but advances have been snubbed by the corporation's executive.



3.15.3

CLAN LYSENKO ▼

While it seems ludicrous that a Nomad Clan could challenge the Merchant Guild, this group plans to do precisely that. Not that the Lysenkos are a typical Nomad Clan, mind you — they are the largest Clan, and they are also spearheading the effort to unite the Nomads into a single nation. While many Nomads view the Lysenkos as nothing more than thugs, the Clan has made enough allies to form a rudimentary Parliament of Clans at Ceres and gain representation for the Nomads on the United Space Nations council. The Lysenkos and its factions represent a significant block of the Nomads, at least around Ceres, and if enough local Clans chose to cut ties to the Guild, it could hurt the Houses that operate in the area. The difficult part has been convincing the Board that the threat actually exists. Most of the Directors expect Lysenko shipping to be completely inadequate for the task, but they forget that Nomads were self-sufficient long before the Guild was ever born.



3.15.4

end of section 3.15 competition



LIVING SPACE

P ♿ ♂ ♀ 2 ♂ ⊕ ♀ ♀



"I've heard that 'success breeds population'. Judging by the crowds, we must be very successful."

- S.W. Cambridge, Residential Housing Office

LOCAL SPACE ◀

Roughly 41 million Mercurians live in local space. The majority — some 29 million — live in orbital colonies while the remaining 12 million or so inhabit settlements beneath the Mercurian surface. A significant portion of the planet-based population is migratory; their jobs require them to stay on the night side, traveling from settlement to settlement where needed. The high orbital population density has prompted the Administration to expand the underground settlements. Though there is space to spare, Mercurians are reluctant to head down to the surface. A variety of reasons are offered, including long-term health problems from low gravity and limited subterranean escape routes in the event of a settlement-wide emergency. However, as new space colonies require much more time and money to construct, Mercurians may be required to live planetside in the near future regardless of their concerns.

The largest threat to inhabitants is solar radiation. Being closer to the sun, Mercury experiences much stronger local radiation levels than the other planets, especially during periods of heightened solar flare activity. Mercury receives far less warning of a solar flare and has correspondingly less time to react. The radiation levels of such flares are also much higher — particularly intense bursts can overwhelm the radiation screens of small vessels. During the peak of the sun's eleven-year cycle of sunspot/solar flare activity, Mercury is practically unapproachable by most vessels. The last peak occurred during 2210, and radiation levels are currently approaching their lowest levels of the cycle. Mercury has been extremely fortunate that it has never experienced a station-wide radiation screen failure.



COMMUTING ▼

Mercurians have two preferred methods of travel: public transit and their own feet. Cities are planned around large amounts of pedestrian traffic, with subway-style train systems providing rapid or long-distance transportation. Operating costs are covered by municipal taxes, and access is free. Both passenger and cargo trains share the tunnels. It is even possible to charter a train, though there is a substantial fee (roughly 200 RP plus additional costs based on load and distance to destination). Subway lines on board the orbital colonies all meet at the central support pylons, where large lifts ascend to the station's core. A second transit system runs down the central station axis, moving passengers and cargo rapidly, though often quite compactly, from one end of the station to the other.

Other forms of vehicular traffic are kept to a minimum, and usually consist of small electrical carts used by Civil Peace and Security and emergency workers. Citizens are very familiar with the sounds of the carts' sirens, and can quickly clear even the most crowded streets to allow the vehicles space to get through. On the orbital stations, ducted thrust flyers are also used to navigate the open space between the station core and the ground. Due to the restricted space and station rotation, these vehicles are not called out except for extreme emergencies.

PERSONAL RESIDENCES ▼

With living space at a premium, residences are always shared with at least one other person. Many regions restrict larger dwellings to families and assign the rest of the population to tiny apartment-cubicles. A typical apartment is designed for three people (or six if the sleeping closets are shared). Off a central common room lie a shower/hygiene booth, a food preparation alcove and three sleeping closets. Storage space is small and devoted primarily to clothing. **Crates** are double-occupancy quarters designed for maximum space efficiency, while **Units** are long, narrow single rooms; they resemble havens, save that they're large enough to lie down in. Accessories such as tables and stools pull out from all walls save one, which is a small storage closet. Crates are arranged in clusters around a common lounge, food prep alcove and hygiene booths. Apartments may have up to three havens. Crates have none, but there are always facilities nearby where a haven can be rented.

▼ PLANETSIDE SETTLEMENTS

Most of the settlements lie in a band encircling Mercury at 90° and 270° longitude. This region falls between the heat poles, and does not heat up as much during the day as other longitudes. Around this band, settlements are more numerous towards the polar areas, although several large mining and spaceport complexes lie along the equator. All habitats are underground, buried beneath 2 to 10 km of rock as protection from radiation and heat. Most are located at the bottom of crater basins, to minimize direct solar exposure. A network of tunnels called the Subway connects major population centers, but many small settlements and outposts can be reached only by surface travel or sub-orbital flight. These locations are effectively isolated for the duration of the 88 days of sunlight.

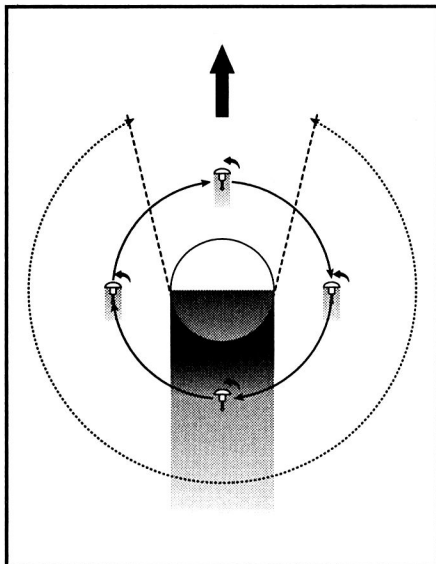
◆ THE SUBWAY

Mercury sports an impressive network of subterranean maglev lines. These trains allow rapid transport between all major cities, with smaller trains available for outlying settlements. A typical route consists of two paired tunnels; the smaller pair transports passengers, while the larger pair is used for cargo. Train size depends on the distance to the destination. Main passenger routes can transport several hundred people at a time, but shorter routes take well below a hundred, but make up the volume through frequent travel.

◇ FARMLAND

Mercury's main artificial surface feature is the solar collector farm. Unlike settlements, these outposts are scattered fairly evenly around the planet to ensure constant availability of microwave energy to colonies in Mercury's shadow. Over half of these farms (namely those close to the heat poles) are not on Subway lines, and can only receive supplies and personnel during the night. On the other hand, farms are self-sufficient and even during most emergencies require little outside help. Farms are at their busiest during dusk and dawn, when solar panels and microwave broadcast towers are being deployed or stowed in their bunkers.

▼ THE ORBITALS



Mercury's orbital population is spread over a dozen Vivarium-type colonies. These colonies are much smaller than their Jovian cousins, with a length of 8 to 12 kilometers (as opposed to 30 to 40 kilometers). There are twenty-one stations circling the planet, with the remainder comprising factories, shipyards and spaceports. The local environment's incredible heat and cold cause a great deal of wear and tear; despite advances in thermal engineering, colony life spans are under a century.

The colonies' distinctive mushroom shape comes from their **Parasols**, massive shrouds that block the direct rays of the sun. To maintain the Parasols' intervening position, colonies tumble slowly, turning end-over-end once per orbit. Massive arrays of ion thrusters fire constantly to adjust this tumble. Parasol-mounted solar cells and surface-based microwave energy transfer stations provide thruster power, while heat exchangers supply power for the rest of the station's needs. Stations still warm appreciably when out of Mercury's shadow, but a system of heat sinks along the Parasol interior keep the temperature within expected limits. Colony orbits are circular, to maximize time spent in shadow.

THE BELT

Thanks to the Guild, the third-highest concentration of Mercurians is in the Asteroid Belt. The Guild operates a network of Yggdrasil-class trade stations, and maintains an office on most other large outposts. Mercury has no interest in constructing a full-sized colony cylinder; the financial costs far outweigh any economic or political gain. The Guild's stations are offered as "free ports," neutral places to conduct business and trade. This is not to imply that these stations are unregulated — the Guild keeps a close eye on any business being conducted, and has no problem expelling anyone who threatens the station or the Guild itself.

Figure 1



A black and white illustration of a futuristic city. The central feature is a large, circular, multi-tiered structure, possibly a space station or a large building, with several smaller structures and a landscape with mountains and a dark sky. The scene is depicted in a stylized, almost abstract manner, with a focus on geometric shapes and a high-contrast, grainy texture. The central structure has a complex, multi-layered design with various platforms and what appear to be small, spherical objects scattered around it. The background shows a dark, mountainous landscape under a black sky, with a few small, distant structures visible on the horizon. The overall composition is centered and symmetrical, creating a sense of balance and grandeur.

Navarre is a moderately large city of approximately 20,000 residents. It is the largest spaceport in the region, although orbital traffic rarely consists of anything other than cargo and water shipments. Navarre itself is not visible from the surface, save for the spaceport in the crater basin. Three solar collector farms perch on the crater rim, and another four lie beyond on nearby plateaus. From the spaceport, massive lifts descend four kilometers to the city proper. The plan is three-dimensional: the central core hosts the business district, while residential areas radiate outwards. The solar collector farms furbish the city with power. Food is grown in an impressive hydroponics facility located halfway to the surface. Navarre offers everything a Mercurian could want: safety, comfort, and a great deal of rock between himself and the hot, blazing sun.

The orbital construction boom of 2137 was mirrored planetside, as power distribution infrastructure was hastily expanded to support the anticipated needs of the new stations. Navarre was intended to be nothing more than a central warehousing site, but it was ideally situated to house the crews for the nearby solar collector farms. Within three years, it had a population of 10,000 technical personnel and their families. Navarre has a typical history in that there is nothing remarkable about its past which could scare off prospective residents. The city did gain brief notoriety in 2187 when a crippled shuttle attempted a daylight landing and missed the pad; rescuers were unable to reach the shuttle in time to save the crew from the heat.

The solar collector farms are the largest employers in the area. Special clearance is required to enter any farm — the Administration still operates under the paranoid assumption that Venusian operatives may try to sabotage the locations. The farms consist of a series of large bunkers that sprout solar panels during the day and microwave transmission towers at night. The power storage systems are a kilometer underground, and can be easily isolated from the rest of the farm if necessary. The farms are connected to Navarre by subway tunnels, and trains run frequently between the city core and all outlying areas. Water Street Station is the main transit hub. From there, passengers can depart for nearby major urban centers.

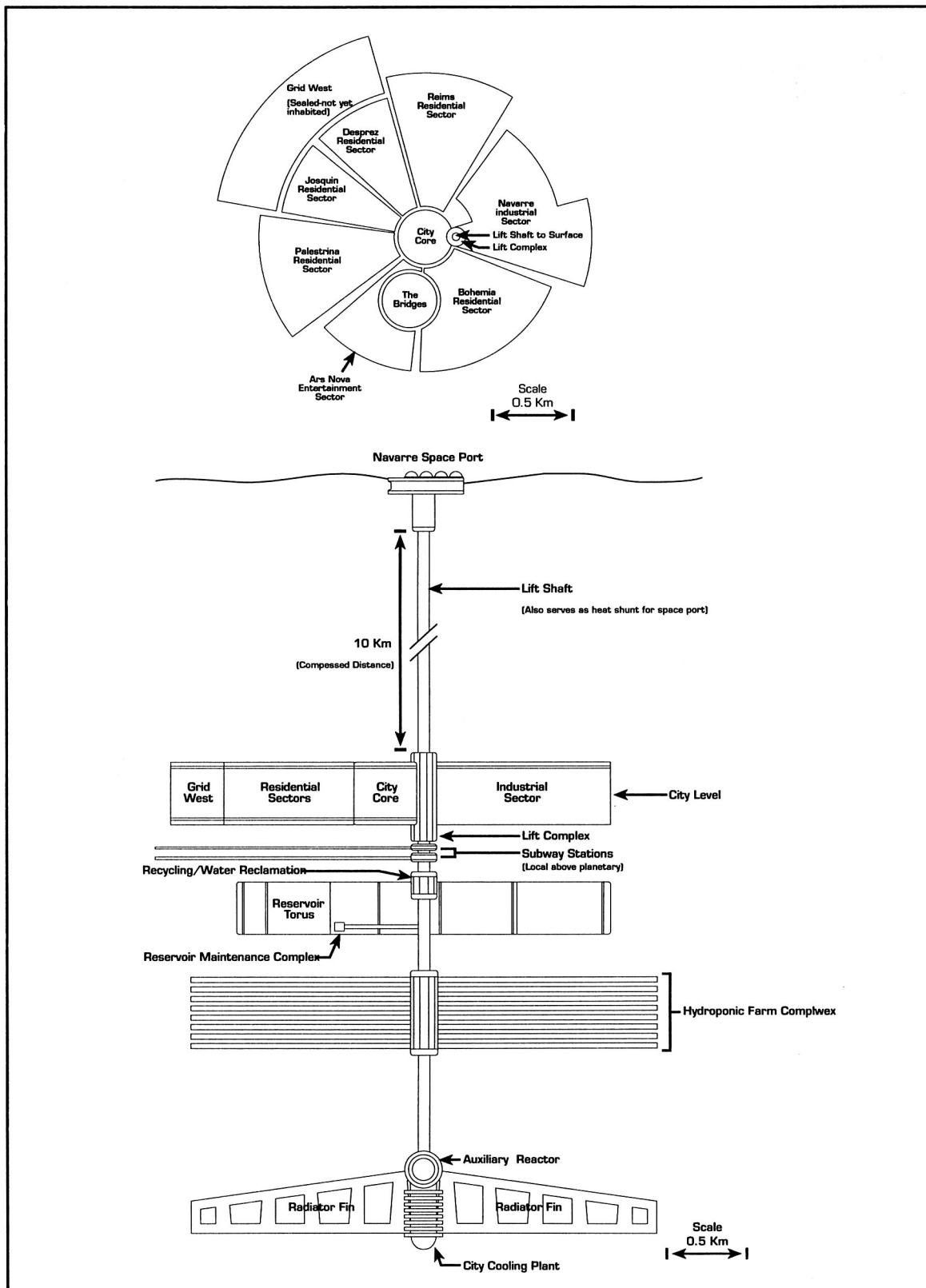
The city core is a maze of atriums and walkways. While it has supposedly been laid out along a fairly straightforward plan, only long-term residents seem to be able to navigate the area successfully. Walkways are named as streets for ease of identification. There is no vehicle traffic in Navarre save for public transit and the battery-powered carts used by the police and emergency services. The largest open space is called **The Bridges**. Close to the city core, it consists of a cavern ringed with terraces, walkways and outdoor cafés. The Bridges are open to all visitors, but only the most influential people have a chance of becoming residents.

Grid West is the newest subdivision of Navarre. Although finished, it has yet to be populated. It was created to house the increasing population of the stations, but the stations' residents are reluctant to migrate down to the surface. The local government was counting on the influx of new people to help pay the construction costs, but until those people come, city Counselors have determined that it is cheaper to keep the subdivision unoccupied than to let Navarre's current inhabitants move in. Needless to say, this has caused quite a scandal.

◆ ADVENTURE HOOK: INTO THE FIRE

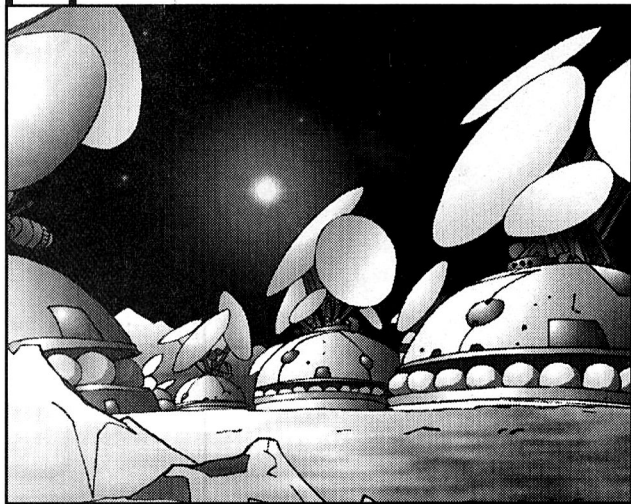
History repeats itself: A damaged shuttle has come down 100 meters from the landing pad in the early dawn light, and the exterior temperature is rising fast. It is already too hot to venture outside in conventional vacuum suits. To complicate matters, the shuttle does not contain equipment, but passengers. Thirty people will die unless they can be rescued somehow before the incredible heat overwhelms the shuttle's environmental controls.

MAP OF THE PORT OF NAVARRE ◀





► WINGFIELD'S GOLD (SOL 342, 31.9 S, 161.4 E)



This settlement is the heart of a fairly large solar collector farm complex located in the Mercurian southern hemisphere. The place is home to roughly 9,000 permanent inhabitants, but can see as many as 4,000 additional migratory workers each eighty-eighty. The habitat is buried beneath ten kilometers of rock, but is connected to the Subway to allow year-round access. Unlike Saul, Wingfield's Gold has an unmistakable surface presence. Not only do the solar collector fields occupy roughly 100 square kilometers, during the day, reflected sunlight makes the solar collector fields quite visible from orbit.

The surrounding farm complex actually consists of six separate farms. All are interconnected, but each could survive as an independent facility if it becomes cut off from the rest. Approximately 75% of the farm's power goes to support nearby settlements and the local portion of the Subway. The remainder is beamed as microwaves to the orbital colonies as they pass by overhead to supplement the colonies' on-board reactors.

▼ HISTORY

Wingfield's Gold began life as one of Mercury's original mining colonies. Founded in 2062 as a test project, the mine was converted to commercial production in 2079, but was subsequently shut down some twenty years later when Venus reassigned the staff. The site's solar collectors were reactivated in 2140 when it became apparent the local settlements were coming to need more power than was readily available. The growing solar farms became such a large employer of local labor that the housing area was expanded into a proper city core to accommodate the increasing numbers of migratory workers.

▼ LANDMARKS

The solar collector fields are the most prominent landmarks. Each field consists of rows of domed bunkers rising about twelve meters above the surface. Nearly all the bunkers contain massive solar panels that are deployed during the day, and every twelfth bunker instead contains a microwave broadcast tower. Power storage is located deep underground, and each farm has a transformer station connected to the subterranean power grid that feeds the nearby colonies. Wingfield's Gold does have a small shuttle port, but this used only for military or direct supply flights. Cargo traffic comes in through the Subway.

The city center was originally built to fit within the existing mining tunnels with only minimal expansion work, and as a result the suburban population is much more spread out than normal planetside settlements. A network of electrical buses has been established, but most inhabitants are resigned to the fact that it takes time to go anywhere. The migrant workers apartment complexes are found near the main transfer points between the Subway and smaller, local routes. This area is either boom or bust in terms of population – it is either packed to overflowing or almost deserted, depending on the stage of the current work cycle.

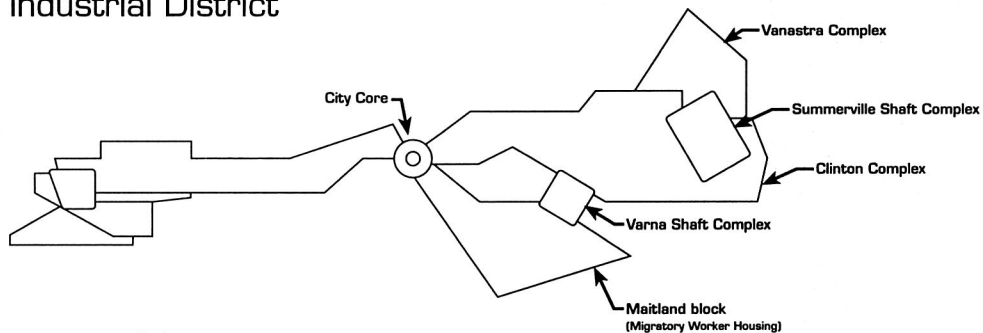
Wingfield's Gold has very little to offer tourists. Even by Mercurian standards, the city center is drab and unexceptional. It does, however, house the **Crowe Coliseum**, the largest sports complex in the region. Because of the settlement's central location, the Coliseum is packed almost every other two-four as residents crowd in. The most popular sport is a low g version of lacrosse that incorporates such a rigid code of "gentlemanly" behavior that it makes the ancient English sport of cricket seem rowdy by comparison.

◇ ADVENTURE HOOK: FLY BY NIGHT

Corvus has tracked a series of remote hacking attempts to a team of migrant workers currently stationed at Wingfield's Gold. The team in question contains twenty people, and Corvus does not have a detailed description of the criminal. To complicate matters, the daytime work cycle is nearing completion, and once the farms have been set up for night ops, the workers will be assigned elsewhere. Investigating agents must work quickly to find him, but if he is alerted, he could slip away before they even know who he is.

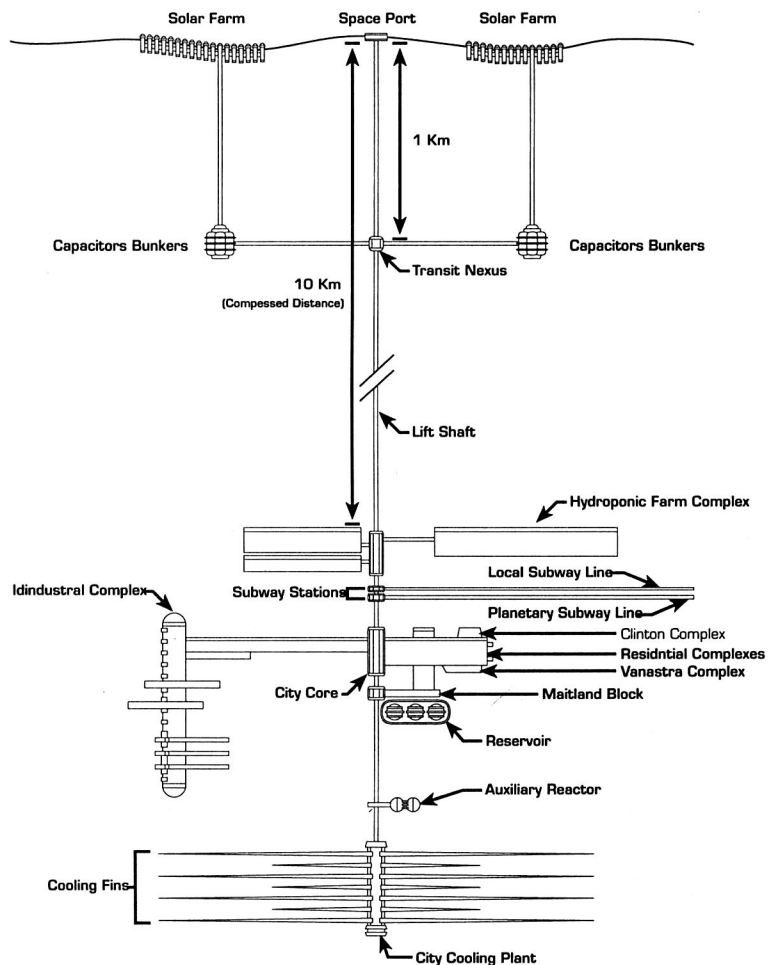
MAP OF WINGFIELD'S GOLD ◀

Industrial District



Scale
0.5 Km

Residential District



Scale
0.5 Km

Helios is Mercury's capital, not to mention the home of the Merchant Guild and some four million other inhabitants. It is not the largest Mercurian station — Ra has that honor — but Helios does have the highest population density of the lot. Helios is nearing the end of its operational lifespan, despite being less than a century old. Large-scale construction in the Mercurian environment was not as technologically advanced when Helios was built, and as a result the exterior hull has suffered marked deterioration from the constant heating and cooling cycles. Helios was due to be decommissioned after the completion of Surya, Mercury's newest station, but the population growth has prompted the Administration to try a massive refit project instead. The most ambitious elements involve building a new hull around the colony. This is more than simply resheathing the external plating — the entire structural system will need to be reinforced as well. The station's rotation has already been slowed to reduce the gravity in construction areas, even though this means that living areas closer to the axis are now less than 1 g. The refit is still in its initial phases, and will be completed by 2216.

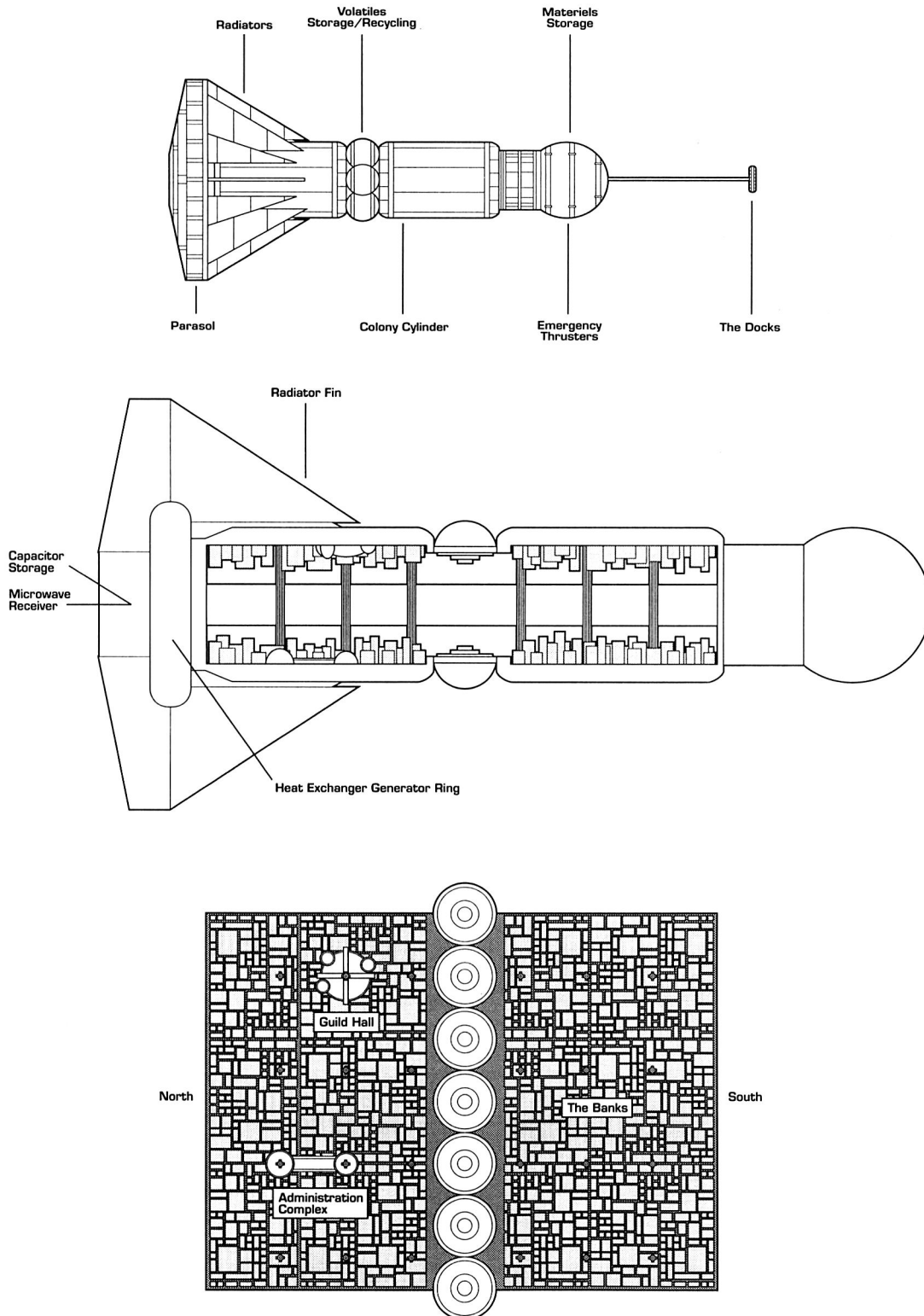
Helios is Mercury's oldest operational colony. Originally due to become operational in 2119, the water shortages and the Water Rebellion stalled completion. Work was finished late the following year, but the official christening ceremonies were delayed for several months so that they could be part of the Independence celebrations. The station's history is largely uneventful, save for a few minor incidents involving damaged vessels. Helios' boring past, however, has made it one of the most popular places to live.

The Docks is a Guild spaceport tethered to the non-sunward, or 'south,' end of the colony. Held taut by Helios' slow tumble, the tether provides the core for a skyhook-style elevator transit system between the port and the station. Despite Guild ownership, the spaceport is open to all Mercurian non-Guild traffic. International ships are unwelcome here, and will be redirected to the customs facilities on Aton. The station interior is called the **Open Air**, and it is one of the largest spaces to be seen inside Mercurian stations, despite the fact that there is not as much actual open space here as other nations' Vivariums. The central axis is a massive structure supporting a powerful environmental control system. The landscape is a crowded urban sprawl, but most buildings sport rooftop patios for residents to enjoy what there is of a view.

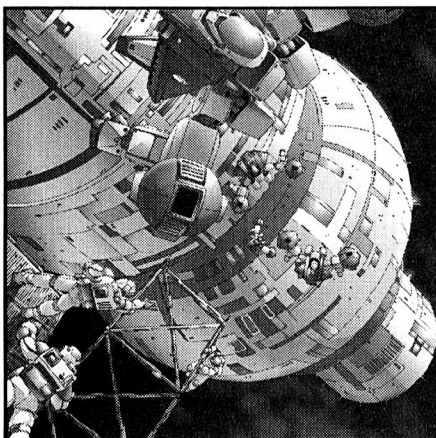
The Administration and Merchant Guild office complexes sit on opposite sides of the cylinder. Guild offices are well protected by their Security Corps, and only active Guild members are permitted inside. In contrast, the Administration buildings are open to the public, and there are always spectators at the Assembly meetings. Only the Sub-Assembly sessions are held privately. The residential area known as **The Banks** has the highest concentration of population on the station. This region sits right against the southern cylinder cap, and is home to the station's less influential and non-permanent residents. The Banks has been compared to the Bowery area of New York, circa the early twentieth century.

Workers on the Helios refurbishment project have made a grisly discovery: thirteen bodies, most decaying but one remarkably fresh, dumped in an unused maintenance shaft near the station exterior. Their corpses have been mutilated in the same way, bearing the unmistakable signature of Samedi Herfan, Mercury's most famous serial killer. A long-time thorn in law enforcement's side, he reappears from hiding every few years to claim another victim. There's just one problem: Samedi's body is one of those discovered, and he was not the most recent victim. All the murders, both old and new, are nearly identical. Is it the work of a copycat, or did Samedi have an accomplice? Is it possible, as the news programs are beginning to claim, that the new killer is part of the police investigation that has been hunting Samedi all these years?

ATON STATION, "GATEWAY TO MERCURY" ◀



► ATON STATION, "GATEWAY TO MERCURY"



As Mercury's primary customs and immigration point, Aton is a showpiece to awe foreigners. No expense has been spared to provide spacious accommodations and numerous breathtaking yet suitably secluded locations to conduct business. All travelers to and from Mercury are routed through Aton; in fact, its port facilities are the only ones open to foreign vessels. Any cargo bound for specific Mercurian destinations is transported the final distance by the Guild. Aton is the only part of Mercury most outworld visitors ever see. The Immigration Office does not often grant visitors permission to travel to other parts of local space, so very few foreigners ever experience the real living conditions first hand. Aton has been designed to accommodate almost every conceivable need, specifically to reduce the number of foreigners leaving the station. After visiting the place, many wonder why anyone would *want* to see the rest of the planet at all.

▼ HISTORY

Almost five years old, Aton was built as a pinch point to control foreign access to Mercury, which had been increasing under Administrator Fairbanks' more open trade and investment policies. The station was originally intended to be little more than a segregated port facility, though the Guild offered unlimited funding to convert it into an orbiting luxury resort. However, population pressures forced the designers to greatly expand the design to accommodate a larger number of permanent residents. Much of the station's history has been punctuated by the Guild's unsuccessful attempts to keep the populace small. Despite claims that a larger permanent population is easier for foreign intelligence agencies to infiltrate, each year another strip of the visitors' section is rezoned for residential housing.

▼ STATION FEATURES

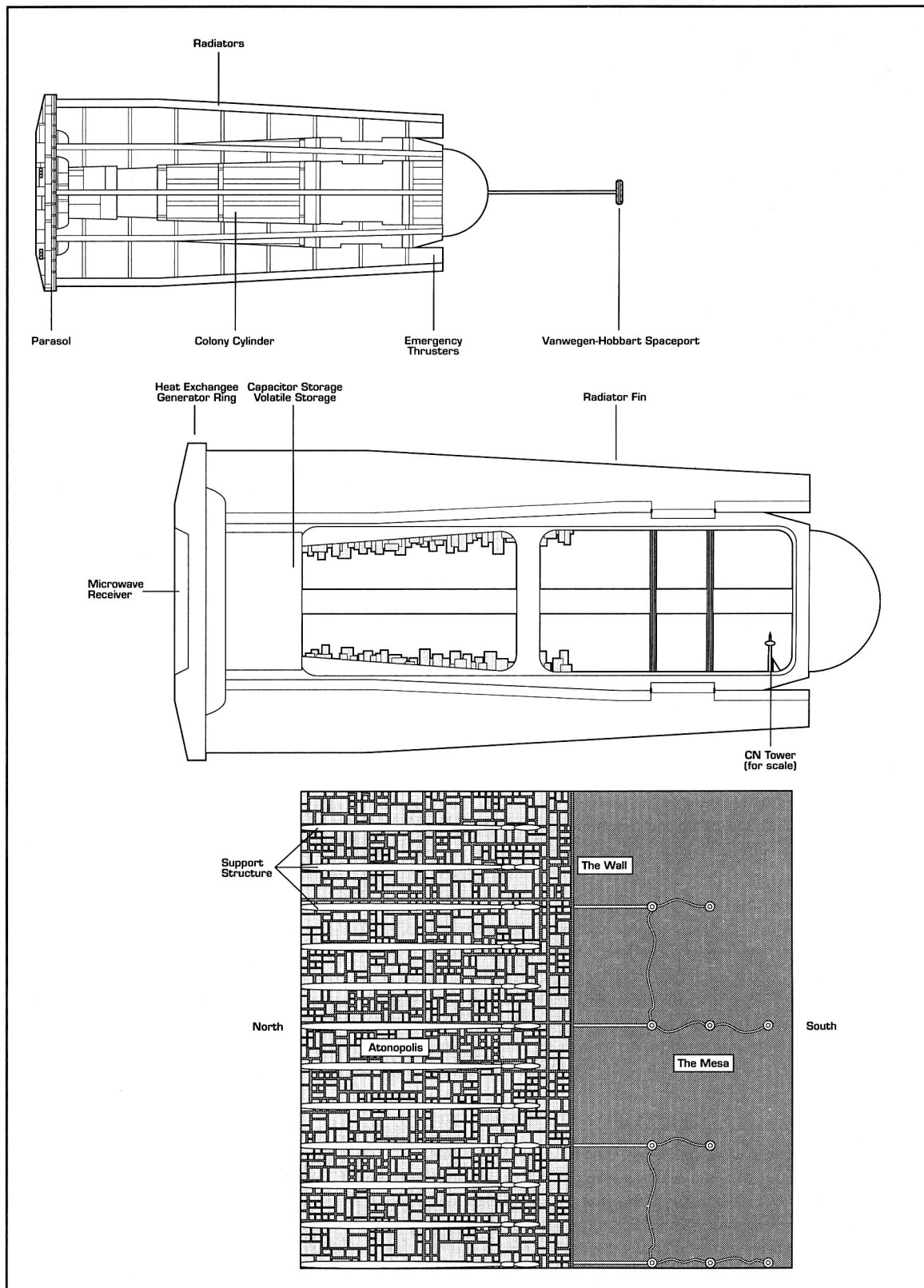
Visitors enter Aton via the **Vanwegen-Hobart Spaceport**, a state-of-the-art facility that could easily handle ten times the current level of traffic. The port is tethered behind Aton in the same fashion as Helios' dockyards. The Guild presence is the smallest here of any of the stations — their main cargo port is more safely isolated at nearby Cacus Station, and the Guild has made a point of not intermixing with foreign vessels. The visitor's section occupies the cylinder's southern end, towards the spaceport. Known simply as **The Mesa**, it is landscaped to resemble California's rocky deserts, both to provide an alternative to the normal pastoral colony interiors and to cut down on the water consumed by imported plant life. Terrain features include rocky outcrops, sand dunes and riverbeds that are allowed to trickle with water on special occasions. Vegetation is limited to collections of scrub brush, cacti and flowering desert plants shipped from Earth.

Most of the accommodations are underground or rise no higher than two or three stories above the cylinder's 'floor.' The only exception is the southern end cap, where luxury hotels climb almost to the station core. The northern end, **Atonopolis**, is much more typical of Mercurian stations, with miniature residential towers crowding what open air lies between the ground and the station core. The division between city and parkland is sharp, station residents separated from foreigners by an actual wall at the edge of the Mesa. Mercurian citizens are not actively discouraged from meeting with foreigners, and are allowed free use of the Mesa, but there are constant reminders, both subtle and obtrusive, that foreigners are not to be trusted.

◆ ADVENTURE HOOK: ONE BAD APPLE

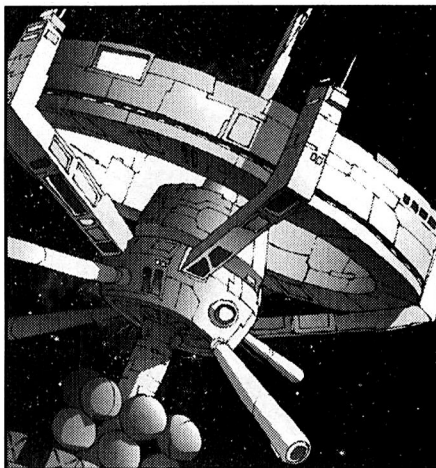
Landscape Architect John Drew has been found in his room, clubbed to death with a small statue. He came to Aton with several other competing landscape companies to bid on a multi-million credit contract to give the Mesa a facelift. All the information on his bid is missing. He had several visitors before his death, including two competing company reps and a Guild broker. The only witness to these visits was the broker's assistant, who is now missing as well. Mr. Drew had recently ended an affair with his own assistant, and was also personally responsible for damaging the credibility of one of the visiting competing company reps. Was this a case of industrial sabotage, a crime of passion, or something different altogether?

MAP OF ATON ◀





► VENEZIA STATION, ASTEROID BELT



Venezia is one of six Yggdrasil-class space stations located in Mars orbit. All share the same orbital path and are spaced equidistantly around the equator. The stations not only function as transfer points for cargo heading to the Martian surface, they also mark the extreme range of the Guild's solar sail barges. Traffic at Venezia is slightly heavier than the other stations, as the facility functions as the command and control center for all Guild assets in the Mars Dispatch. Tidswell House is the exclusive owner of this station, though Mersy House operates the repair docks.

In addition to its role as a cargo transfer facility, Venezia is also a port of commerce and openly bills itself as neutral ground for Martians to conduct business. However, most prudent traders are aware that "neutral" means "does not compromise or jeopardize the Guild." As the Guild is very aware of how little weight international convention carries around Mars, Venezia also carries a full squadron of Agares fighters and Brimstone exo-armors.

▼ HISTORY

Venezia was the last Yggdrasil to be constructed in Mars orbit, and was built specifically to headquarter Tidswell House's Martian trade mission. Until 2210, it had very little to distinguish itself save for a higher volume of Guild traffic. After Heaven Station came tumbling down, Venezia and her sister outposts became crucial to maintaining the flow of offworld trade, though it has been pointed out this included arms shipments as well as humanitarian aid. Venezia's role as a diplomatic meeting ground is only two years old, and considering the current state of Martian conflict, has been of questionable value. A recent incident between Federation and Republic orbitals came very close to damaging Venezia, and has resulted in a six-month ban of Martian vessels of both sides on all local Guild stations. The Guild's Board of Directors, while officially endorsing the decision, has quietly informed Tidswell House that shipments to the Martian surface will continue. Guild pilots are now in the dangerous position of having to make the deliveries themselves.

▼ STATION FEATURES

Venezia is a standard Yggdrasil-class space station (see **Mechanical Catalogue Two**, pages 88-91), though it has been modified for extended occupancy. From the outside, the most obvious feature is the large cargo structure. Nearly a kilometer long, this facility is a hub of activity as freight is constantly shuttled planetside or to waiting outbound freighters. Several of the cargo modules are actually Guild Security Corps hangars, containing six Agares fighters as well as twelve Brimstone exo-armors. A repair dock caps the structure's far end. It is the only such Guild facility in the dispatch, and can accommodate four mid-sized vessels at once.

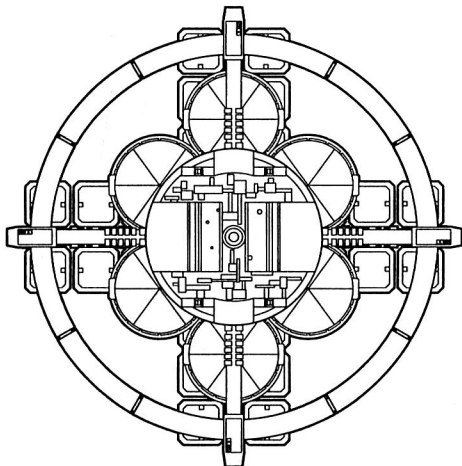
The gravity wheel is larger than the Yggdrasil standard, and is intended for prolonged occupation, divided into two heavily segregated sections. The **Mercato** is open to all travelers, and contains numerous meeting places, markets and residential accommodations. This section occupies roughly one third of the circumference, and though the Guild Security Corps maintains a visible presence, visitors are usually left to do as they please. The **Corridoio Mercantile** is the Guild portion of the station. Access is limited to Guild personnel, and all entrances are heavily guarded. Even the Corridoio's computer system is a completely separate network from the Mercato. Apart from this segregation, the section is almost identical to the other, save that it also contains Central Tracking's facilities plus the station's command and control areas.

◇ RETURN TO SENDER

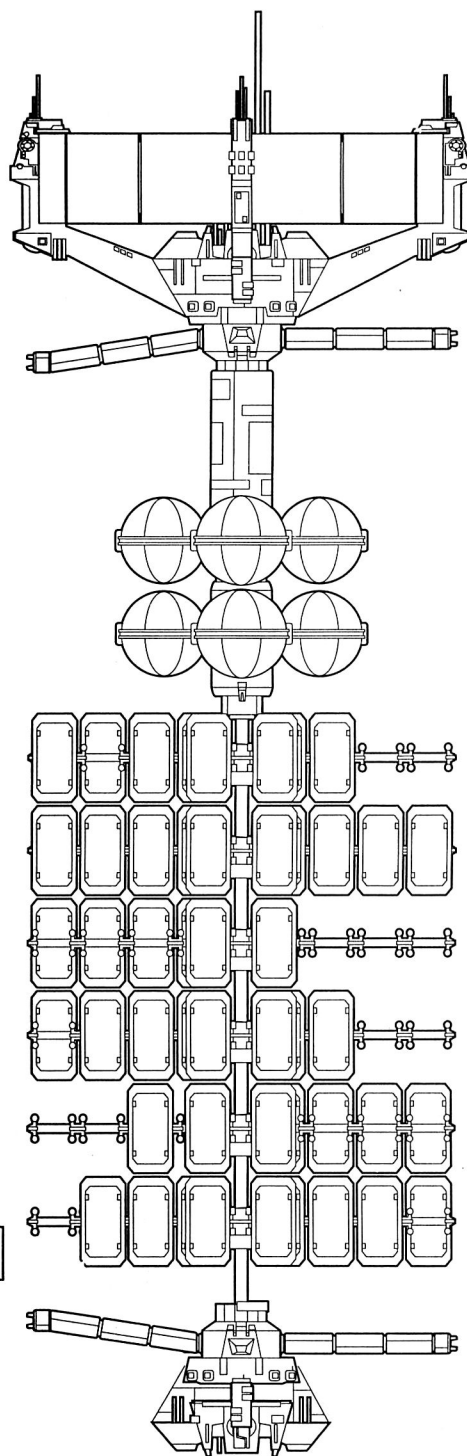
A Guild shuttle has been shot down over the Melas Chasma, a canyon that is part of Valles Marinarus. Tracking shows it was a surface-fired missile, but the origin is unknown — both the Federation and the Republic have forces in the area. To complicate matters, part of the shuttle's cargo included Hellhound exo-suits bound for a Guild Security Corps detachment currently stationed planetside to defend Guild assets. Players are part of a hastily dispatched rescue mission charged with locating the shuttle, retrieving survivors, and either salvaging or destroying the exo-suits before hostile forces discover the shuttle and the cargo.

STATION SCHEMATICS ◀

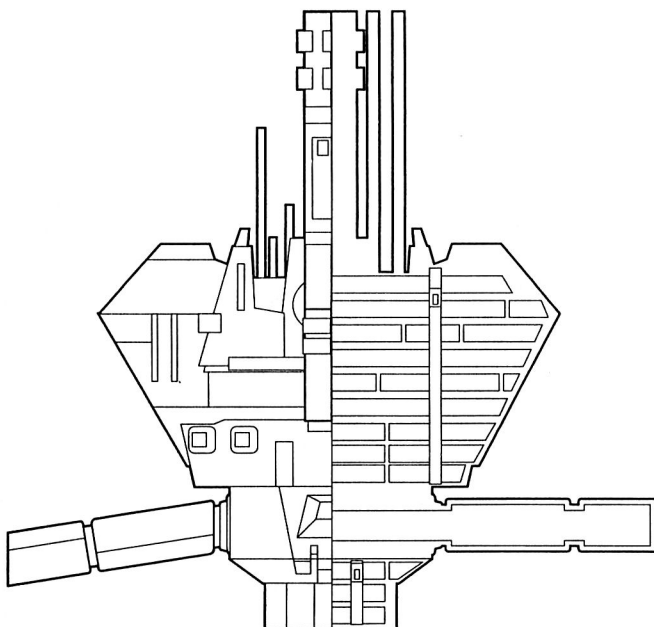
Top View



Side View



Internal View of the Main Hub





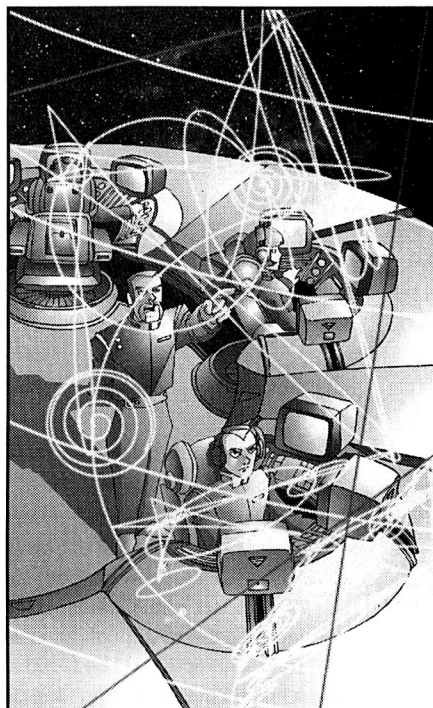
"I am not lost. I know exactly where I am. It is the rest of the universe that is in error."

- Katerin Van Maar, Pilot

A QUESTION OF DEPTH ◀

Mercury is difficult to conceive as a setting without immediately including the Merchant Guild. The Guild offers unlimited potential to put Mercurian Characters into the middle of trouble no matter where it may occur in the Solar System. There is also the possibility the Guild may have even caused the trouble in the first place — its carefully maintained neutrality can create just as many problems as if the Guild had meddled directly. There are, however, other aspects to both Mercury and interstellar trade that lend themselves as settings without the political backdrop of the Guild.

As independent traders and shippers, PCs would be faced with the task of eking out a living while still meeting the expenses of operating a commercial vessel. This setting has the added advantage of being open to anyone with a vessel, a good head for business and a large amount of starting capital. Planet-wise, Mercury has historically been little more than a Guild support structure, with no overt social or military problems. That should not stop Gamemasters from taking advantage of some of the unique aspects of the location, such as the underground cities, the lack of water and a daytime temperature that can instantly barbeque organic material. Even without the Guild, organizations such as Corvus, Civil Peace and Security and Response Squads offer opportunities for both action and intrigue-based adventures.



1.1

MERCURIANS AT LARGE ◇

Mercurians can be easily incorporated into any game, provided the setting allows for the inclusion of a range of nationalities. Mercurians are everywhere in the solar system, either as part of the Guild or simply exercising their wanderlust. Most have skills oriented towards shipboard activities, and even for those who lack (or have forgotten) the training, the Guild's reputation goes a long way in merchant circles. These individuals could easily find their way aboard any civilian ship, or even be hired as an advisor to a merchant company. Of course, Mercurians do not have to have merchant backgrounds at all — a vacationing CPS detective can turn up in Jovian space almost as easily as a Guild captain.

Venus and Saturn are the two places where Mercurians will not be found in great numbers, due mainly to either the historical context or current business situations. Things may change for Venus — the Mercurians conduct a lot of business there, despite the mutual animosity — but unless something radical occurs, it is unlikely the Titanian Hydrocarbon Corporation will ever allow Mercurians, much less the Guild, anywhere near its operations.

WORKING CAPITAL ▼

Mercurian money is valued at roughly twice that of the standard credit on the economic strength of the Guild alone, although RPs are not accepted anywhere outside of Mercury (or Mercurian-owned territory). In local Mercurian space, apartment rental and the enormous cost of living will eat up most of the average Character's income. Those who travel beyond the borders quickly discover that their hard-earned cash is generally worth a great deal more to the rest of the Solar System than back home. Even perfectly average Mercurians, through their Practice of Conservation, can support regular vacations to other worlds. Those who are after an even greater degree of freedom could (with the help of a very frugal lifestyle) eventually invest in a spacecraft, although they may quickly find they still need a Mercurian income to keep it operational. If a Mercurian really wants to get away but lacks the financial means, the Guild is still willing to offer citizens a Working Passage berth, where travelers can voyage as ship's crew in lieu of paying for tickets.

5.1.1
end of section 5.1 a question of depth

► ACTION

The Guild is everywhere, and it is almost inevitable that some poor Guilder will be caught in the middle when the shooting starts. Even if Mercury is not a target, there is still enough risk from collateral damage. In fact, Mercury and the Guild have done such a good job at cultivating their neutrality that apart from pirates there really are no major villains to pit directly against Mercurians in an Action setting. While some people are opposed to the level of influence the Guild wields, the national powers would much rather extort or manipulate the Guild than beat up on it. They all need the Guild too much, especially since no one is willing or able to develop a viable replacement.

Even inside Mercury's borders, violence is not a common occurrence. Those unbalanced enough to cause hostile disturbances are typically detected while still in childhood and placed in therapy. However, when violence occurs it can reach horrific levels. Riots within Mercury's tightly packed housing quarters could be disastrous. Players could play several adventures as SWAT team members, but violent crimes are normally too infrequent to allow full campaigns.

▼ SHOOTOUTS AND CHASE SCENES

These descriptions may give the impression that Mercurian adventures tend to play out like BBC crime stories: high on drama, low on action. This is not actually the case, although conditions in settled areas will prevent easy justification of most kinds of North American-style gunplay and vehicle pursuits (unless playing at the Cinematic level of Reality Distortion — see **Jovian Chronicles Rulebook**, page 223). The high population density prevents both indiscriminate firearm use and limits vehicles to smaller electrical carts the size of compact cars. Chases will almost always be on foot, but Gamemasters can use the constant crowds to increase the tension of pursuit: the antagonist could duck into a crowded atrium, or board a packed subway train. Characters will be faced with the daunting task of bringing down villains in hand to hand combat; using a firearm means waiting for a clear shot that may never come, plus the risk of starting a panic should the shot be taken. Gunfire and chases might be better played out on the Mercurian surface, where PCs will not be hampered by the risk of injuring bystanders and a wider range of vehicles is available. There, of course, the time limit is more pressing, no standard vehicle able to withstand the heat of the Sun for long.

▼ MILITARY ACTION



This is a more traditional style of Jovian Chronicles setting. Characters have access to a variety of military hardware, including exo-suits and armors. Unfortunately, the Mercurian armed forces as a campaign setting suffers from one major flaw — no enemies. If Gamemasters want Mercury to become embroiled in a major conflict, they will have to create both credible foes as well as the means to allow Characters to operate abroad with military assets. For smaller-scale combat, there are some settings that are ideal, such as the Belt.

The Guild Security Corps is much more extensively deployed than the National Navy, though there is still plenty of opportunity for both to combat pirates or other forces seeking to reduce Guild influence. Mars has potential for offering ground combat scenarios, especially since neither Martian state is too careful when it comes to checking a target's nationality before firing. Either military service could function as a jumping-off point for paramilitary adventures. Retired Mercurian foot soldiers have extensive hostile environment low gravity guerilla training, and may be recruited as "advisors" by groups with interests in Mars or the Belt.

INTRIGUE ◀

Intrigue is the bread and butter of most of Mercury's agencies. Next to the Venus Bank, the Guild is probably the largest target for infiltration and espionage: it is big, powerful and knows too much. Most solar nations would not even consider a military option when dealing with the Guild; conversely, Mercury's military is too weak to be a consideration when dealing with other solar nations. When a dispute arises involving Mercury, the universal weapon of choice is information. Economics alone is not enough, as neither the Guild nor the solar nations would benefit from sanctions and embargos. Specific, embarrassing information, however, could be used to force one side to concede without any indication of a conflict having been fought. Unfortunately, Mercury is usually on the defensive in such engagements. It plays defense quite well, but apart from a few select teams, it lacks the assets to carry the fight out of its own backyard. Typically the areas at greatest risk are Mercurian offices and stations in foreign or unclaimed territory, such as Earth space or the Belt. The unrestricted access necessary to conduct business also makes it easy to insert agents, and Mercury can usually do little against those agents until they are inside Mercurian territory.



CORVUS AND THE GUILD SECURITY CORPS ▼

There is no shortage of foes for these agencies, and Players will have their hands full dealing with all the current threats, both real and perceived. Corvus goes to great pains to keep its activities hidden from casual view. Combat, chases and the like can still happen, but Gamemasters should keep in mind that most of Corvus' enemies will be trying to keep as low a profile as Corvus itself, and will not do anything openly or impulsively unless desperate. Usually, PC efforts will involve investigation and surveillance.

Characters will most likely be field agents, with assignments taking them to any Mercurian-owned location. Typical adversaries consist of small teams of infiltration agents sent to gather intelligence or raid Guild data. Terrorist acts are uncommon but not unheard of. Most solar nations, though, will use some other means than violence to emphasize a point with Mercury. While Corvus operates primarily in local Mercurian space, agents are occasionally sent abroad; joint operations with the Jovian Intelligence Service are rare, but they do happen, even despite recent events. PCs may also be sent on pre-emptive strike actions. Typical targets include the Venus Bank and some smaller organizations in the Belt, although technically CEGA could now be a justifiable target. These are precise operations, and are aimed more at embarrassing targets than causing physical damage.

POLICE WORK ▼

Police stories on Mercury more closely resemble classic detective tales. Average criminals are very quickly caught and apprehended, thanks to Mercury's very open society. Clever villains, however, know many ways around watchful citizens. They have, after all, managed to keep their darker tendencies hidden through many psychiatric evaluations, even at an early age. Most of these criminals are not foolish or egotistical enough to challenge the CPS directly. Instead, they would rather use their abilities to remain out of sight while continuing their illicit activities. PCs could be either CPS detectives or criminal psychologists, and the actual detective work should be geared towards the PCs' capabilities. If too easy, Players will be bored; if too hard, they will be frustrated. It may take a while to find the proper balance; Gamemasters should not be afraid of asking their Players for feedback. As a note, Corvus does not usually deal with criminal matters unless the nature of the crime constitutes a national threat.

5.3.1

5.3.2

end of section 5.3 intrigue

► ASSEMBLING THE CREW

The term “crew” simply refers to a group of Characters that will be working together. It is not necessarily a merchant crew, or even a part of a merchant crew. It can be a team of explorers, Corvus agents, zero-g workers and so on. The composition of a crew is fairly flexible, and depends greatly on the demands of the adventure or campaign being created. The only real consideration comes when balancing the number of Mercurian Characters against those of other nationalities. It is important to remember that typical Mercurians are cliquish and will tend to segregate themselves from non-Mercurians unless they have no other choice. This is especially true for all those currently on active service within the Guild. The most balanced crews will either be comprised entirely of Mercurians, or will have Mercurians as a small minority. In all other mixes, the Mercurian personalities — if played true to form — will dominate the group unless balanced by similarly strong-willed, extroverted Characters. If the Gamemaster is going to allow these other mixes, all Characters should have some very good reasons for working together.

▼ ACTIVE ROLES

It goes without saying that Character concepts should be chosen to suit the adventure. However, the best concept can be stymied if the Character ends up in a job that does not allow him a great deal of freedom. It may seem like an excellent idea to let someone play the ship's chief engineer, for example, but the demands of the job, particularly on older ships, may prevent the PC from ever realistically setting foot on shore over the course of an adventure, especially if he's tied down conducting repairs or damage control. The Player may also find the Character concept far too limited to be of any use outside a situation requiring technical expertise. NPCs should be used to fill crew positions that have narrow adventure potential such as engineers, technicians and shipboard security. Working Passage could be another alternative, allowing a Character to function in a role only until the destination is reached. At that point, the Character becomes free of his shipboard commitments and can leave the vessel.

▼ CHAIN OF COMMAND

This is perhaps the single hardest thing for Players (not Characters) to establish and respect. Most games encourage individual choice and freedom, but in this particular instance, these traits are subordinated to the needs of the team. Many Players find a military-type hierarchy frustrating either because they do not know how the system works or because they are unwilling to work within the limits of the system. These frustrations can be made even worse if another Player's Character is in command.

Gamemasters must decide how strictly they are willing to enforce the chain of command. This will be partially dictated by the adventure setting; a merchant vessel, for example, will not be operated with military discipline. However, the Players should also be considered. If they cannot or will not play within a regulated environment, the Gamemaster should either be willing to relax the system to fit the Players' behavior or he should consider a different setting.

Whatever the choice, Players should be informed well ahead of time how the chain of command works, what limits will be set, and how each Character fits into the structure. Gamemasters might even consider letting the Players decide who they want to have in charge before Characters are created, in order to avoid any potential personality conflicts. Once the game begins, Players should be given a lot of leeway until they become accustomed to the hierarchy and can play in-character accordingly.

▼ THE “IN” CROWD

One important thing to keep in mind about Mercurians, whether as Characters or NPCs: they prefer their personal relationships to be as clearly defined as possible. This may make Mercurians seem rather snobbish and elitist, as many Mercurians will seek out the company of their own kind before they consider accepting outsiders, and have no problems putting others in their place (from a Mercurian point of view). This can be easily incorporated as a plot device, requiring PCs to figure out a way to get into a Mercurian's good graces somehow in order to obtain a favor, a piece of information, or something similar. A Mercurian Character may have to deal with the consequences of arbitrarily rebuffing someone who seems to be intruding. This attitude may make for some interesting interaction between Mercurian and non-Mercurian Characters, but only if it does not damage the ability of a group of PCs to work together.

CHARACTER CREATION ◀

Players creating Mercurian Characters should consider some of the following issues when coming up with concepts or actually designing characters. These are just guidelines, and may be adjusted or ignored. Players should always check their concepts with the Gamemaster before actually generating statistics. It will save a great deal of time should an idea be rejected.

COMMON MERCURIAN TRAITS, PERKS AND FLAWS ▼

Mercurian body types are split fairly evenly between normal and Lightworlder. The actual type depends on whether the individual lives predominantly in an orbital colony or underground. ZeeGees are rare and consist of less than 5% of the population. Typical Mercurians have at least an average rating in Influence (INF) and Psyche (PSY). It is almost impossible to survive Mercurian society with anything less. Ratings in Creativity (CRE) and Knowledge (KNO) likewise tend to be high, thanks to the advanced education system.

All Mercurians have Survival (Space) at Level 1. Their native language is the Mercurian Dialect, which they have at Level 2. Most Mercurians also speak Spacer's Runic and at least one other language, usually English, Japanese or German. Active Bonded Guilders receive Language (Merchant's Tongue) at Level 1, although Players may wish to consider buying this up to a higher level. Skill in the Merchant's Tongue drops by one Level for every two eight-eighties since retiring. Other Skill choices tend to be focused on either technology or business and social elements. All Mercurians use personal beacons and ration cards, and most carry action packs. Personal weapons of any sort are generally not carried unless working or vacationing in an area where combat is probable. Roughly 30% of all Mercurians indulge in skin tinting, although this group tends towards a younger demographic.

Mercurians have no limit in their choices of Perks with the single exception of Property. Habitable real estate on Mercury is at a premium, and unless the Character is fabulously wealthy, he will never be able to afford to own even a small dwelling, such as a crate. The other Perks are freely available, although Radiation Resistance is not as common as is generally believed. On the other hand, the unique Mercurian education system has made Quick Learner much more common than in other cultures. The Bonded Status of Commended or Sponsored, as well as the Unbonded Status of Good Standing, can be purchased as the Prestige Perk (**Jovian Chronicles Companion**, page 25). The specific Status should be listed as the area of influence, although all Statuses technically have the entire Guild.

Mercurians will not normally have Flaws related to social status or mental health, especially the severe or long-term versions. Players will need a strong justification as to why these deficiencies were not detected in their Characters' childhood and corrected. Alternately, Characters could also be given the additional Flaw of Obligation (Therapy) to indicate ongoing treatment. Mild phobias are a possible exception. Typical maladies include fear of enclosed spaces (claustrophobia), crowds (demophobia) and open spaces (agoraphobia). Less frequent are fears of sunlight (photophobia) and subterranean places (troglophobia).

CAREERS ▼

Mercurian careers tend to be lumped into two categories: the Guild and everything else. Even Characters who are not part of the Guild still gravitate towards merchant or trade-related roles, or at the very least something involving stellar travel, such as exploration or survey. The Guild has struggled so hard to carve out a niche that most Mercurians cannot conceive of being in any other occupation when working abroad. At home, within the confines of Mercurian space, the story is quite different. Mercury is a functioning, viable community, although with strict limitations in certain areas. Practically any career is open, from the military to hydroponic farming. Most careers found here, though, have little excuse to travel as part of their jobs. Notable exceptions include Corvus and, to some degree, the Navy. Fortunately, Mercurians have the potential to turn up almost anywhere within the Solar System — they just go on vacation.

IN OR OUT? ◇

Players should also give some thought to their Characters' social backgrounds as well as the social implications of the current setting. Clear relationships — defined as either friendships or associations — should be established between themselves and all other PCs and NPCs. Unless the Player has a good reason, it is unlikely the entire crew will be regarded as friends. Mercurian Players should be reminded that real friendships are hard work and somewhat rare.

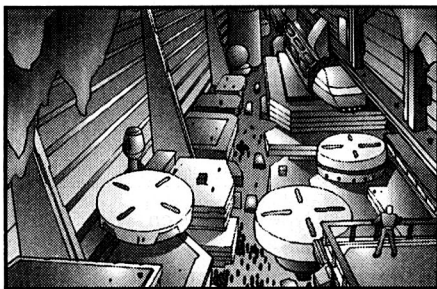
5.5

5.5.1

5.5.2

end of section 5.5 character creation

► FACES IN THE CROWD



With over 65 Archetypes currently published, Gamemasters have a large resource with which to develop Non-Player Characters (NPCs) to round out a game. Rather than include a series of new Archetypes specific to Mercury and its organizations, a reference has been provided to allow Gamemasters to easily locate an appropriate existing Archetype. The reference has been broken down into four categories. All Mercurian Archetypes have Mercurian Dialect at 2 and Survival (Space) at 1, and CPS officers have the Skill of Psychology at 1 (or add 1 if the Skill is already present) with a specialty in Crowd Control.

▣ LOCALS

Required Archetype	Existing Archetype	Reference
Average Mercurian Bloke	Average Mercurian Bloke	Mercury Sourcebook, facing page
Counselor	Counselor	Mercury Sourcebook, facing page
Response Team Member	Crisis Team Trooper	SolaPol Sourcebook, p. 58
Solar "Farmer" Technician	Technician	Main Rulebook, p. 108; Companion, p45

▣ CORVUS

Required Archetype	Existing Archetype	Reference
Agent (Generic)	SolaPol Agent	Main Rulebook, p. 107
Agent (Undercover)	Undercover Agent	SolaPol Sourcebook, p. 61
Data Technician	Analyst	SolaPol Sourcebook, p. 57
Deep Cover Operative	CEGA Infiltrator	Ships of the Fleet, Vol 2, p. 127
Profiler	Counselor	Mercury Sourcebook, facing page
Surveillance Operative	Space Traffic Controller	Spacer's Guide, p. 71
SWAT/ESWAT Trooper	Atropos Operative	Jupiter Sourcebook, p. 79

▣ CIVIL PEACE AND SECURITY

Required Archetype	Existing Archetype	Reference
Criminal Psychologist	Counselor	Mercury Sourcebook, facing page
Detective (Generic)	Marshal	SolaPol Sourcebook, p. 55
Detective (Undercover)	Undercover Agent	SolaPol Sourcebook, p. 61
Forensic Scientist	Forensic Scientist	SolaPol Sourcebook, p. 59
Policeman (Beat Cop)	Patrolman	SolaPol Sourcebook, p. 60
Policeman (Generic)	Crisis Team Trooper	SolaPol Sourcebook, p. 58
Policeman (Veteran)	Clotho Agent (Jovian)	Jupiter Sourcebook, p. 78
SWAT/ESWAT Trooper	Atropos Operative (Jovian)	Jupiter Sourcebook, p. 79

▣ MERCHANT GUILD, SHIP CREW, DOCK WORKERS

Required Archetype	Existing Archetype	Reference
Longshore/Cargo Officer	Cargo Master	Spacer's Guide, p. 73
Damage Control Tech	Technician/Gadgeteer	Nomads Sourcebook, p. 63
Master Officer (Generic)	Merchant	Main Rulebook, p. 104; Companion, p. 38
Mate (Generic)	Bosun	Ships of the Fleet, Vol 2, p. 124
Mate (Gunner)	Shipmate	Main Rulebook, p. 106
Medic	Medic	Main Rulebook, p. 103; Companion, p. 37
Navigator	Navigator	Ships of the Fleet, Vol 1, p. 125
Passenger Steward	Passenger Steward	Spacer's Guide, p. 74
Security Corps Guard	Soldier/Security Officer	Main Rulebook, p. 107; Companion, p. 43
Stevordore or Longshoreman	Zero-G Heavy Labor Specialist	Nomads Sourcebook, p. 64
Technician (Generic)	Technician	Main Rulebook, p. 108; Companion, p. 45



AVERAGE MERCURIAN BLOKE ▼

This is a typical example of a Mercurian from the surface or orbiting colonies. Mercurians are better educated than average, speak several languages and are ideally equipped for working within crowded social environments, but carry a pervasive aura of arrogance.

ATTRIBUTES ▢

AGI	0	APP	0	BLD	0	CRE	0	FIT	0
INF	1	KNO	1	PER	0	PSY	1	WIL	0
STR	0	HEA	0	STA	0	UD	3	AD	3

SKILLS ▢

Skill	Lvl	Attr	Skill	Lvl	Attr	Skill	Lvl	Attr	Skill	Lvl	Attr
Athletics	2	0	Computer	2	1	Lng(English)	2	1	Human Percept	1	0
Bureaucracy	1	1	Etiquette	2	1	Lng(Merc Dialect)	2	1	Streetwise	1	1
Business	1	1	First Aid	2	1	Lng(SpcrRunic)	1	1	Survival(Space)	1	0

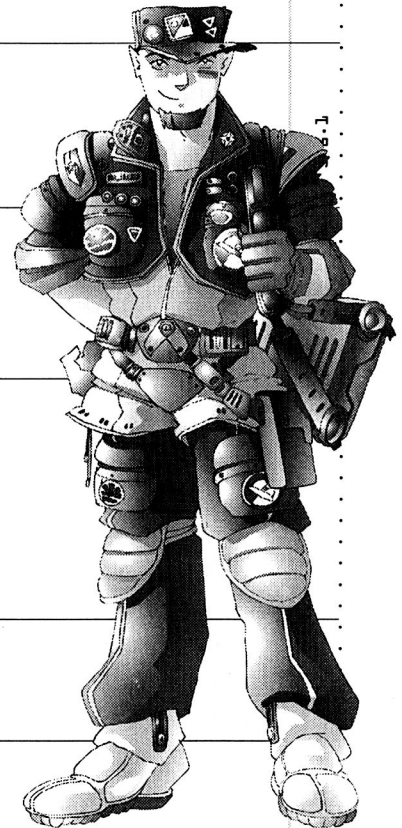
Other Possible Skills: Haggle, Mechanics, Zero-G Movement,

EQUIPMENT ◇

Personal Beacon, Ration Card, Action Pack (optional) and Skin Tint (optional)

SIMILAR ARCHETYPES ◇

Vendor, Pedestrian, Bystander



COUNSELOR ▼

Counselors occupy a unique social niche. Less than friends, yet more than associates, counselors are intimate confidants charged with maintaining the mental well being of Mercurians in need. Specialists, such as criminal psychologists and trauma therapists, are also relatively common, though they rarely operate independently of larger organizations. Counseling is free for citizens, but by appointment only.

ATTRIBUTES ▢

AGI	0	APP	0	BLD	-1	CRE	0	FIT	-1
INF	0	KNO	1	PER	1	PSY	1	WIL	0
STR	-1	HEA	0	STA	20	UD	2	AD	2

SKILLS ▢

Skill	Lvl	Attr	Skill	Lvl	Attr	Skill	Lvl	Attr	Skill	Lvl	Attr
Computer	1	1	Investigation	1	1	Psychology	2	1	Survival(Space)	1	0
Etiquette	2	0	Lng(Merc Dialect)	2	1	Streetwise	1	0	Theatrics	2	0
Human Percept	2	1	Notice	1	1	Social Science	1	1			

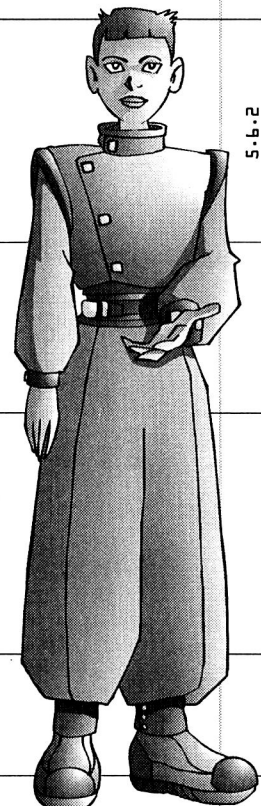
Other Possible Skills: Hand to Hand, Interrogation, Law, Social Sciences

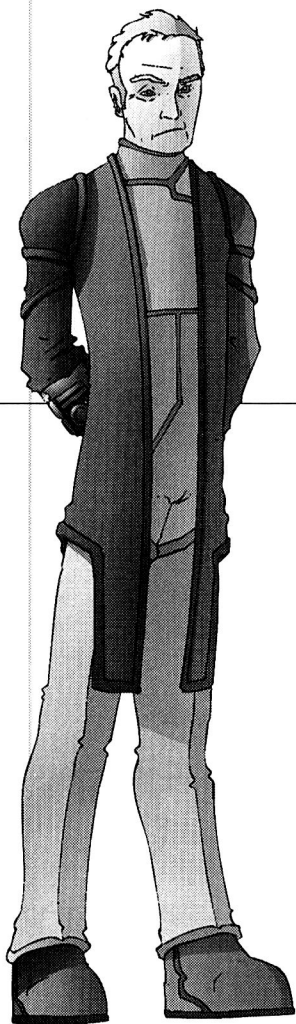
EQUIPMENT ◇

Personal Beacon, Ration Card and Datapad

SIMILAR ARCHETYPES ◇

Criminal Psychologist, Corvus Interrogator, Profiler, Trauma Therapist





▼ DR. EDWARD VANDERMARK, COUNSELOR

The infamous Doctor Edward Vandermark is a man grown old before his time. His thin, ruffled appearance is at least a decade ahead of his actual age, though the rest of him seems to be doing its best to catch up. His face is a carefully composed mask of neutrality, betrayed only by the pattern of anguish-formed wrinkles lining his eyes and forehead. His eyes are a smoky gray, but carry such intensity to their focus that people under his scrutiny often feel uncomfortable, as if he has just caught them in a lie — even if nothing has actually been said or done.

Despite his well-weathered appearance, he is still energetic, albeit it is an energy very tightly contained. His movements are very deliberate, from the largest gesture down to the smallest facial expression. Even his laughter seems planned and directed, which leads most people to dismiss him as being fake and artificial, somehow. Nevertheless, there is some dignity to his bearing, no matter how stilted it may be perceived as being.

◇ DESCRIPTION

Dr. Vandermark claims he is not interested in ridding Mercury of evil, but his record says otherwise. He is a much sought-after counselor with a success rate that places him in the top 10% of his profession. He is also a contract criminal psychologist regularly called in to assist CPS. His efforts with law enforcement have won him three civilian commendations. Even Corvus has knocked on his door on more than one occasion, although he cannot discuss those visits for security reasons. Despite all his accomplishments, he falls far short of the person his record describes him as being.

Vandermark's deep understanding of the flaws in the Mercurian psyche stems mainly from his ongoing struggle with his own inner demons. His Guild service was spent almost entirely in the Belt, and he only narrowly avoided a disgraceful discharge due to a violent addiction to stimulants. His career's near-death experience gave birth to the resolve (and stubbornness) for which he is famed. He has learned to control himself and his cravings with an iron will, which has imbued him with a surprising ability to withstand emotionally disturbing conditions, while at the same time it has made him deathly afraid to put himself in circumstances where he may lose that control.

He often extends this control to other people, either subtly or blatantly manipulating them to do as he wishes. While this ability alone has won him numerous successes, it has not endeared him to his co-workers. To his credit, he also has a sharp, intuitive mind and a keen enough perception to know when not to push.

◇ STATS

Dr. Vandermark is based on the Counselor Archetype (see page 65) with the following changes: His KNO and PER are both at 2, His CRE is at 1 and he has the skills Investigate 3/+1, Interrogate 2/+1 and Psychology 4/+1. He has several contacts in the CPS and effectively has the Prestige Perk (Law Enforcement) at 3.

◇ NOTES AND HOOKS

The good Doctor is a powerful NPC, and is probably best used as a source of information, especially if it pertains to criminal actions or profiling — building a psychological profile of a criminal based on his actions and physical evidence. Dr. Vandermark is also extremely good at interrogating suspects, and could be used against prisoners the Players could not otherwise crack. The doctor will not take an active part in investigations. He will offer advice freely, but will make sure all the legwork is done by the PCs. Dr. Vandermark is also a regular counselor, and it is entirely possible a Character could have him as his own private therapist either full-time or assigned to cure a particular ailment, such as an addiction or a phobia. The doctor's techniques are effective, though they are also brutal and direct.

KELLY MORGAN, PSYCHOPATH ▼

Physically speaking, Kelly is an extremely forgettable person. Her bland physical features lack any distinguishing characteristics, and she is thin enough to appear almost androgynous. Her hair is a mousy blonde and carries no curl or bounce. Ultimately, her appearance is of little consequence, as no one has seen her true face in years. As a master of disguise and an accomplished actor, she can assume almost any identity if given enough time to study and prepare.

DESCRIPTION ◇

Kelly is a psychopath, but not of the kill-crazed variety popularized by cheap horror programs. She suffers from a mental condition characterized by a low empathy towards other human beings. She has the capacity for basic instinctual reactions such as pain and pleasure, but does not experience more complex human emotions such as love. She is completely amoral, comprehending no consequences for her actions save for those that affect her directly. This is not an exotic ailment — a certain percentage of Mercurians can be classified as psychopaths, but they are quickly rendered completely harmless in terms of potential for violent behavior. They may, however, be extremely emotionally disruptive to others. Usually, counselors will constantly monitor such people to minimize their impact on society, but even despite this extra attention Kelly has become dangerous enough to kill.

She was identified early, and guided into a career as a combat medic where her lack of empathy could be an asset. She has always been aware of her condition, but once out of the Guild and free from the distractions it offered, she began to obsess about her lack of emotional understanding. She reached a point where she did not want to be herself anymore. Kelly thought she could comprehend and even experience the feelings she lacked if she became someone else. Unfortunately, there was only one way she knew how to do that.

Kelly chooses her victims with great care. She starts by establishing a large group of friends, and then looks for one who is due for a long-term transfer to somewhere remote. She will start spending more time with that person, learning to imitate behavior and appearance. She has the technical know-how to make basic alterations to a personal ID card, reprogramming it with her own information, although any detailed examination will reveal the tampering. On the day of the departure, after her target has said goodbye to everyone, she will execute a carefully planned murder that leaves her in the victim's place. The only evidence will be a badly mutilated body that may take weeks to identify.



STATS ◇

Kelly is based on the Medic Archetype (**Jovian Chronicles Rulebook**, page 103) with the following changes: Her CRE, INF, KNO and WIL are all at 2. She does not have the skill Human Perception, but she does have Theatrics at 3/+2, Disguise at 3/+2, and Electronics at 1/+2. She should be treated as having the Perks Fake Identity and Quick Learner (see **Jovian Chronicles Companion**, p24).

NOTES AND HOOKS ◇

Kelly is intended to be a potent villain. She is responsible for a string of murders going back some fifteen years. If she were any less capable, she would have been caught long ago. She is very good at using the Mercurian social system to cover her tracks. She is not limited to gender-specific disguises, and has masqueraded as men on several occasions. She will avoid people and situations that could bring her unwanted attention, and will not remain in a location that has become dangerous to her. If cornered, however, she has no qualms about defending herself by any means necessary.

PCs could encounter Kelly anywhere. She is not limited to Mercury; she could easily appear at any location with Guild connections. Unless Characters are specifically hunting her, they will most likely have no idea who she is. Her name is famous, but her face is not. Possible plot twists could have Kelly becoming intimately connected with a PC, possibly even as a Counselor. Kelly may even eventually decide the PC would be her ideal next choice for her exploration of the human condition.



▼ CONSTABLE CAROL BRODER, CIVIL PEACE AND SECURITY

Constable Broder is tall for a Mercurian, a fact made only more imposing by her impeccable CPS Constable's uniform. She is in her late forties, and usually carries a look on her face that suggests she has seen too much of life to put up with any crap. When approached, she is polite and professional, offering whatever assistance is required to resolve the situation. She is capable both mentally and physically of solving the more common interpersonal problems of Mercurian society, whether it be a brawl or a simple domestic dispute. Her stern expression, however, always softens when she speaks to any of the residents in the precinct where she works.

◇ DESCRIPTION

Carol Broder has never wanted to be anything other than a cop. Though she served with distinction during her National Service Requirements in the Guild Security Corps, she felt she was really just putting in her time before heading back to Mercury and getting "a proper job." After floating through some temporary assignments on Helios, she finally found permanent placement in the Port of Saul, Precinct 172. In the quarter Earth century she has spent on the job, she has become a fixture in her patrol area. Few constables have gotten to know the region as well as her, and fewer still are on friendly terms with as many of the residents. She has been decorated twice for gallantry, although she does not like to talk about how she earned those decorations; she sees such conversations as bragging.

Her psychological profile has indicated that she views her occupation almost as a calling, and while she has accepted temporary promotions and reassignments, she has turned down anything that could take her off the streets for extended periods of time. Her superiors would very much like to get her experience into a more administrative venue, but so far they have honored her choices. Her profile also indicates that while she has a genuine passion for her work, she also has the potential to cross lines in defense of her community, both above and beyond the call of duty as well as in the other direction. Fortunately, she knows how to work the system well enough that any exceptional behavior has always been resolved in a positive direction.

◇ STATS

Constable Broder is based on the Soldier/Security Officer Archetype (**Jovian Chronicles Rulebook**, page 107) with the following changes: her INF and WIL are both 1, and she has the skill Psychology at 1/0 with a specialization in Crowd Control. As part of her uniform, she wears Duraplast Mail and carries a stun club (electrified nightstick) and a Walter-Stromm Police Special sidearm (dual laser pistol and sonic stunner).

◇ NOTES AND HOOKS

The Constable can be a fixture in any sort of campaign, not necessarily those that are police-based. Her beat could be changed to practically any area around Mercury or the orbital stations. Wherever she is, her knowledge of the region and the locals will be extensive and invaluable to anyone operating in the area. She also has the respect of her fellow officers and of her department; she is an ideal resource for anyone who needs the assistance of the law in a hurry, provided the request itself does not jeopardize neighborhood safety. Unfortunately, her local popularity makes her singularly unsuitable for undercover work, and she will refuse to assist directly in any covert operations for this reason.

As an opponent, Constable Broder could be a very dangerous person. Her connections with the community also give her a unique ability to single out anything new or different — something that could cause endless headaches for foreigners on a covert infiltration mission. This could also cause similar problems for undercover Corvus agents, especially if they are conducting a sting operation.

MASTER INSPECTOR AARON PETROVICH, GUILD LIAISON ▼

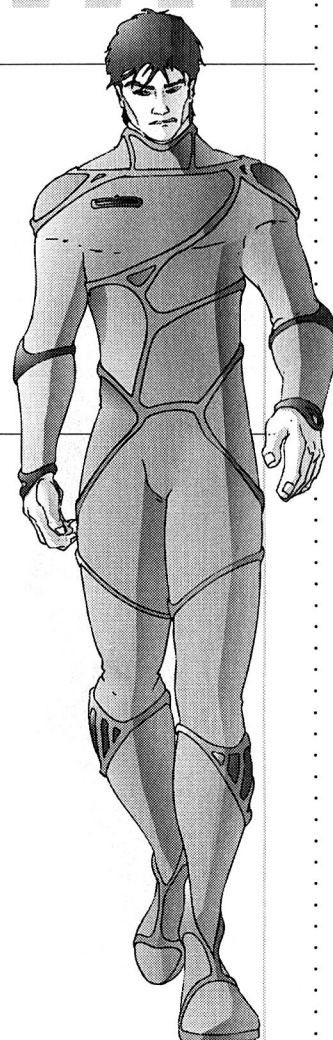
The first thing people usually notice about Master Aaron Petrovich is his skin, which just happens to be a bright orange. While he is in no way a part of the skin tint fad currently possessing the Mercurian youth, he does take the tint pills purely as a safety measure for the added radiation protection. He has used the tints for so long the color has seeped into nearly every physical feature: his hair, fingernails and even the whites of his eyes have been muddied by an orangey hue. Only his teeth remain their natural white, and they stand out against his orange face. He tends to wear clothes that cover as much of his skin as possible. He is rather embarrassed by the color, but has little choice but to suffer through it until a more naturally shaded tint can be developed. He does not let this discomfort get in his way, however, when there is work to be done.

DESCRIPTION ◇

Master Officer Petrovich has worked with the Logistics Division for his entire twenty-year career. During that time he has been posted to almost every major Guild station in Earth Orbit, plus two stations in the Asteroid Belt. He began his career as a spacecraft fusion drive inspector, but within five years he had distinguished himself enough to begin training as a full Liaison.

Within the Guild, Liaison is a catchall interface position. Essentially, the Guild selects a handful of talented individuals to receive additional training in administrative and interpersonal skills. Liaisons continue to work in their respective areas of initial expertise, although now they form the 'front lines' of those individuals who deal regularly with foreign clients and customers. In Master Petrovich's case, this means staying with the Guild Certification Office, but being available to perform inspections on any commercial vessels, not just those that are Guild-owned.

Master Petrovich is now regarded as a full Mechanical Inspector. He is still a little lacking on the electronics side of things, but he is working to eliminate that deficiency. He is, however, still fully capable of certifying a vessel as spaceworthy, or decertifying it if circumstances demand. While nothing definitive has been said about the subject, rumors abound that part of Master Petrovich's transfer back to Mercury from the Belt was due at least in part from death threats he began receiving after he deemed several independent mining vessels unfit for operation. The matter is still under investigation.



STATS ◇

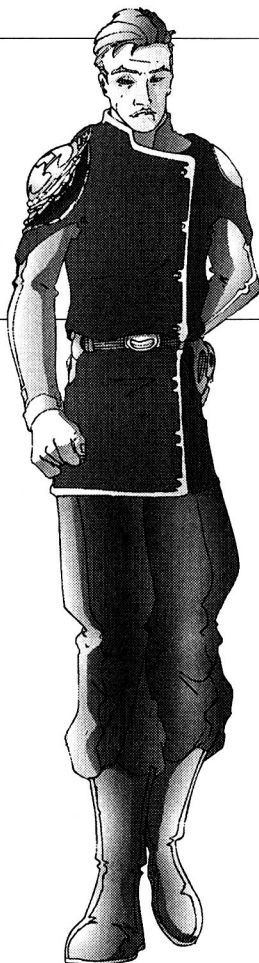
Master Petrovich is based on the Official Archetype (**Jovian Chronicles Rulebook**, page 105) with the following changes: His KNO and PER are at 2, and he has the additional skills of Electronics at 2/+2, Mechanics at 3/+2, and Notice at 2/+2. Master Petrovich is part of Logistics Division. He is not directly affiliated with a House and while he is Bonded he does not have any exceptional Status.

NOTES AND HOOKS ◇

There are numerous roles Master Petrovich could play in a campaign. The most obvious is as the dreaded inspector, come to scrutinize and judge how a captain has taken care of Guild property. Though the Guild takes care of most of the paperwork documenting a vessel's spaceworthiness, frequent inspections, both scheduled and unscheduled, ensures that the Captain and the ship's owners have been doing their parts to maintain a good operating condition. If the PCs are not part of the Guild, they may still find themselves seeking Master Petrovich's services. Often, Guild inspectors are contracted to provide an impartial vessel evaluation for certification and insurance purposes.

Master Petrovich could become embroiled in a certification scandal. He would not normally accept bribes to certify a ship, but extraordinary circumstances could force him to do it. He might even be completely innocent, and the entire accusation a setup to disgrace him and ruin his career. It would not be the first time he has been threatened. Players could be called in by Corvus, the Security Corps or CPS to investigate allegations made against Petrovich, and possibly even end up defending him from physical harm.

5.6.7



▼ CAPTAIN BERGEN VELSE, RAYNE HOUSE

Captain Velse is an older gentleman with straight black hair streaked with silver and a thin moustache reminiscent of those worn in the early twentieth century. He appears to be in his late fifties, but moves with the grace of a much younger man. His extended time in weightlessness has made him a little awkward on his feet in anything above 0.8 gees, but he can still move around in full gravity without the assistance of a cane. His manner of speech is very distinct, and he takes great pride at being able to speak without any trace of what he refers to as "that insufferable Mercurian pidgin."

◇ DESCRIPTION

Captain Velse commands the Caravan-Class freighter MMGS *Jodhpur*. The freighter itself is currently designated as an Open Ticket freighter; that is, it is assigned to wherever the Guild needs extra ships on a particular route. He is currently working out of Venezia Station at Mars, running supplies from the solar sail transfer docks to trade stations in the Asteroid Belt. The move is recent, and was made in response to the looming trade war with Clan Lysenko.

Rayne House is taking the threat seriously, and is pulling in extra freighters to ensure there is no cargo for the Lysenko transports to carry — at least, not from Guild stations. Velse and the *Jodhpur* are not on a specific cargo route. They are based out of Cheswick Station near Ceres and make runs to isolated Nomad homesteads not currently on Guild cargo routes.

The Captain is a veteran of Belt trade, and has been operating in the region since completing his National Service Requirement. The *Jodhpur* is actually his second command. The first, the MMGS *Lucknow*, came to an abrupt end when a pirate vessel, while attempting to disable the freighter's drives, pierced the main reactor. The crew was able to abandon ship before the reactor's magnetic bottle collapsed and destroyed the vessel. It is partially because of this incident that Captain Velse has requested and received a hangar module for the *Jodhpur*, although he claims the exo-suits are an invaluable help when moving cargo at remote stations. Much to his relief, this is the only thing he has needed them for so far.

◇ STATS

Captain Velse is based on the Merchant Archetype (**Jovian Chronicles Rulebook**, page 104) with the following changes: his INF is 2 and his WIL is 1. He has the additional skills of Leadership at 2/+2, Navigation (Space) at 1/+1, and Zero-G Movement at 2/0. He is part of Rayne House and has the Bonded Status of Commended. He commands the Caravan-Class freighter MMGS *Jodhpur*, currently equipped with 10 standard dry cargo containers, 1 habitat module and 1 hangar module currently housing 6 Hellhound exo-suits.

◇ NOTES AND HOOKS

The *Jodhpur* is a good starting place for Players with Guild Characters. The transport route offers opportunities to come into contact with almost every faction in the Solar System, not to mention the chance to become embroiled in an actual conflict or two with the Lysenkos, Mars, or some pirate threat. Players could have either merchant or combat Characters. The hangar module has been indefinitely assigned, and the pilots and techs it houses are not segregated from the rest of the freighter.

Conversely, Captain Velse and his ship could become competition for a PC-owned transport. Rayne House is not the only House in the region with shipping contracts from Mars to the Belt. In fact, some of the smaller Houses are extremely upset at the large number of extra freighters being called in, and are trying everything they can to avoid losing an equivalent percentage of their business to Rayne House's expanded capacity. Merchant Characters would not even need to be a part of the Guild. In fact, *not* being a part of the Guild would leave them free to use much more underhanded tactics in any direct competition.

LONGSHORE'S LEAD LAHN AROlsen, CARGO OFFICER ▼

Lead Arolsen is not a physically imposing person, an observation seemingly inconsistent with the fact that she moves around 2000 ton containers for a living. In reality, she is almost the ideal height and build required to operate standard exo-suits. She keeps her hair cut shorter than Guild regulation to prevent it from becoming an inconvenience in zero gravity. Her mannerisms are subdued and her speech is very direct; though Mercurian born, these traits often cause her to be mistaken for a Nomad. On the other hand, she has a sly charm, which, when coupled with her ability to strike up a conversation with almost anyone, has won her a large number of friends.

DESCRIPTION ◇

As a Cargo Officer, Lead Arolsen's job is to coordinate cargo loads with the Logistics division; that is, make certain that what is on the ticket is what is going into the hold, and ensure that payment has been made for transport before the cargo is stowed. If assigned to a ship accepting Open Tickets (see page 74), she is the one who negotiates directly with any prospective clients. She also oversees the loading of cargo, and (based on the tickets she gets in advance) creates a loading plan that will leave the cargo perfectly balanced around the freighter's axis of thrust. It is not an easy job; while she does have some grasp of the physics this task entails, most of the work is done intuitively. Fortunately, she seems to have a knack for "balancing a brick on a pin," as she puts it.

Lead Arolsen has made a point of cultivating a lot of friendships during her travels, mainly in the hopes of keeping a large number of contacts set up and waiting for the day she leaves the Merchant Guild and starts a business of her own. Most of the contacts are station-based cargo masters, although she has actually managed to speak to several Nomad fences connected with the so-called Grey Market, a merchandise-laundering operation aimed at the resale of stolen or pirated goods. Arolsen is unaware that Corvus knows of her new friends; the only reason she has not been arrested is she has not done anything more than talk. Corvus is still deciding whether to notify the Guild and have her reprimanded, or wait and see if she does anything more serious.

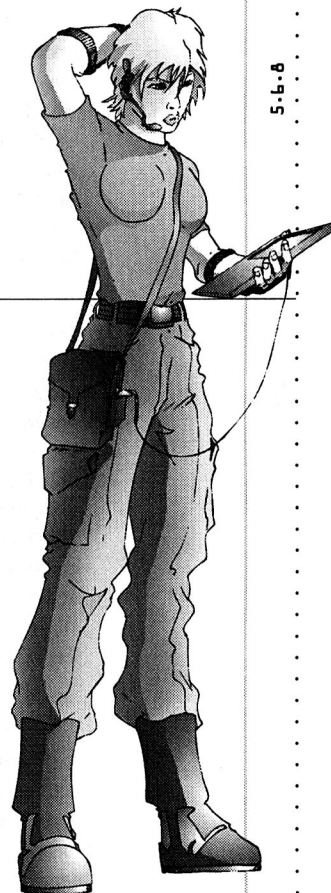
STATS ◇

Lead Arolsen is based on the Cargo Master Archetype (**Spacer's Guide**, page 73) with the following changes: Her KNO is +2 and her CRE and PSY are +1. She has the additional skills Bureaucracy 1/+2 and Physical Sciences at 1/+2. When dealing with Nomads, she is treated as having the Perk of Personal Reputation (Nomad) at +1 (see **Nomads Sourcebook**, page 60).

NOTES AND HOOKS ◇

Lead Arolsen is a good asset for any merchant ship. Her numerous connections guarantee access to better and faster service than would normally be provided, although she may still end up in a large amount of trouble over her Grey Market contacts. On the other hand, if the PCs are not a part of the Guild, she can easily be changed into a Nomad Grey Market Fence (boost her Personal Reputation to +2). It should be noted that while Arolsen can operate exo-suits, she is not a combat pilot and will be the first person to point out that giving her exo a gun is a bad idea.

She can also be a part of an active Corvus or Guild Security Corps scenario. The PCs could be assigned to quietly watch her for signs of wrongdoing, possibly even undercover on the same vessel she currently serves on. The PCs might even be asked to try to recruit her in an attempt to infiltrate or break up a pirate or smuggling operation.



5.6.8

end of section 5.6 faces in the crowd

Merchant Guild campaigns tend to be smaller in scope than military storylines, with the primary focus on economics: moving cargo, making money and paying bills. The following sections cover a few issues which may come up while conducting a merchant campaign, and hopefully will provide some guidance towards creating realistic adventures. Extensive rules regarding commercial space travel and starship operation can be found in the **Spacer's Guide**, *Chapter 3: Traveling in Space*. As a note, the basic system for calculating shipping costs is based on transport distance: the square root of the length of the journey in kilometers gives the basic price in credits per kilogram of cargo to be shipped. Divide this amount by 2 if shipping bulk or dry cargo, by 4 if shipping liquids and by 10 if shipping gasses. Logistics handles all money transactions. Unless taking Open Tickets, merchants will not have to worry about collecting or depositing shipping fees.

Guild freighter captains have very little freedom. They are required to go wherever Logistics directs, and transport whatever cargo Logistics commands. This can be an ideal plot tool to control PC movement and ensure they do not wander too far afield. On the other hand, Players may balk at having to run according to a schedule, or see very little potential in a campaign based in such a tightly managed setting. Gamemasters may instead wish to let PCs operate an Open Ticket freighter — a ship entirely committed to transporting extra cargo in a specific Dispatch. It may occasionally be assigned to work a particular cargo run during busy times, but otherwise Characters would be allowed to go wherever their cargo takes them. This is actually a common practice in the Belt, especially in Nomad-populated areas where regular Guild runs are uneconomical or simply not yet established. There are still some limits. Unless assigned to a Transit Fleet, Open Ticket freighters are still required to operate within their assigned Dispatches, and PCs would still need to file flight plans and cargo manifests with Logistics. Other than that, they are on their own.

The Guild takes care of all ship-based paperwork like insurance, registration, safety certification and inspections, entry and exit visas and all shipping permits. Unless Players enjoy a Gritty game with lots of administrative chores, paperwork and accounting should never become the focus of a story. The countless forms and permits are only meant to be plot devices, obstacles or excuses to get PCs involved in things they would normally never consider. The cargo and trade rules regarding paperwork have been left a little vague for this reason, as well as to keep certain types of Players from picking apart the system in a search for loopholes.

Travel time is a critical factor in any shipping business. Late shipments cause all sorts of complications, not to mention giving the shipper a bad reputation. Also, the solar nations are weeks or even months apart, and stellar travel will comprise a large portion of a merchant character's career. In **Cinematic** games, travel time tends to be a plot complication or a roadblock to discourage certain actions. In **Gritty** to normal campaigns, however, travel time is an important consideration, mainly because of the Character downtime possible while en route. The easiest way around this is to set the campaign in regions that offer the widest variety in the smallest space, such as the Belt, the Jovian Confederacy, or the colony-filled near-orbit space of the inner planets. Since transit times in these areas can be measured in hours or days, travel and shipboard life can be active elements of the game without dominating the scenario for extended periods of time. For lengthy journeys, if PCs are working on a vessel large enough to provide an interesting environment, the entire voyage can be roleplayed. Otherwise, Gamemasters may wish to gloss over extended journeys.

Travel time can be calculated using the following formula, reprinted from page 86 of the **Jovian Chronicles Companion**. The formula is based on the number of Equivalent Burn Points a captain or pilot wishes to spend to make the trip. Half the EBP's are spent accelerating the vessel at the start of the journey, while the other half are spent decelerating the ship at its destination. The ship is assumed to be coasting (not firing its engines) during the middle. Average planetary distances can be found on page 168 of the **Jovian Chronicles Rulebook**. Acceleration time is calculated through the second formula. Deceleration time is equal to acceleration time. Procedure requires freighters to accelerate at Combat Speed or less during normal operations.

$$\text{Travel Time in hours} = (\text{Distance in kilometers} / (\text{EBPs Spent} \times 15)) / 3.6$$

$$\text{Acceleration or Deceleration Time in hours} = \text{EBPs Spent} / \text{Combat Speed in MPs} \times 30$$

MASS, ACCELERATION AND EQUIVALENT BURN POINTS ▼

A freighter's mass varies wildly based on the amount of cargo it carries. Substantial cargo loads will affect ship's acceleration, making it much slower. If a cargo's actual mass is known, a freighter's loaded Top Speed in Movement Points (MPs) can be determined using the space towing capacity formula below. Loaded Combat Speed is half of Loaded Top Speed. Fractions greater than 1 should be rounded up to the nearest whole number. Fractions less than 1 should be rounded to the first decimal place. A freighter with fractional MPs must burn Equivalent Burn Points (EBPs) for several combat rounds before movement can be changed by one actual MP equivalent. Also, since EBP are based on a vessel's actual Top Speed, they should be recalculated to reflect the fact that it takes more fuel to move a heavier mass at an equivalent acceleration.

Top Speed in MPs = (Ship's Empty Mass x Top Speed in MPs) / (Ship's Empty Mass + Cargo Mass)

Fractional Movement Points	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1
Rounds of Burn to Accumulate 1 MP Equivalent	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	5	10

CASH FLOW & FUEL COSTS ▼

Merchant Guild freighter captains have considerably fewer worries than independent merchants, especially in terms of expenses. All Guild vessels can refuel and replenish consumables for free at any Guild base or station. The amount used is tracked and billed to the owning Division or House. Any berthing costs are waived. Guild freighters will also not handle money directly unless dealing with Open Tickets, at which point the cash will be given to the Cargo Officer and stored as a part of ship's funds until it can be transferred to a Mercurian Merchant Credit Union office. However, there may be times when no Guild facilities are available. The following sections and the Economics Reference provide rough price guidelines for fuel and consumables if they need to be purchased from foreign facilities.

Burn Points (BPs) are based on ship size and fuel type, and as such do not have a set mass. The following formula roughly calculates the fuel mass in tons carried. The formula uses BPs, not EBP. Multiply the ship's fuel mass by the Base Cost per Ton to get the price of a full load of fuel. Divide that price by the number of EBP to determine the amount of credits each incinerated MP of thrust is worth.

Fuel Mass = Ship's "Empty" Mass in tons/100,000 x BPs carried x Fuel Type Mass Multiplier (see below)

Fuel Type	Mass Multiplier	Base Cost per Ton
Very Light Gasses (Hydrogen)	X 1	25 credits
Light Gasses (Helium 3)	X 2	20 credits
Water	X 20	10 credits

CONSUMABLES ▼

A Crew Day is the calculated amount of consumables (food, water and life support) a single crewmember uses in 24 hours. There is no upper limit to a ship's Crew Day capacity, save for cargo space: a single Crew Day occupies 0.05 m³ and weighs 0.002 tons. A ship can automatically store Crew Days equal to its Deployment Range in days multiplied by the capacity in people of the largest life support system on board. Extra supplies occupy cargo space. Each Crew Day costs roughly 20 credits to replenish, but prices vary widely depending on materials availability.

ROUTINE MAINTENANCE ▼

Once per game week, the Chief Engineer makes an Opposed Mechanics Roll against the ship's Lemon Dice. The base maintenance cost is 25 credits in parts, with failed rolls multiplying that amount by the Margin of Failure. If the Chief Engineer botches, the ship acquires a random defect, rolled from the Lemon Defect Table found on page 107 of the **Jovian Chronicles Companion**. Each week routine maintenance is skipped, the Gamemaster instead makes a regular Lemon Roll. If the ship's entire Deployment Range passes without routine maintenance, a defect is automatically acquired. All maintenance-related defects are considered temporary, and can be repaired normally. Rather than have Players keep track of spare parts stores, maintenance costs are deducted from Ship's Funds as they are incurred.

5.8

5.8.1

5.8.2

5.8.3

5.8.4

► CARGO TICKET GUIDELINES

Because the Guild assigns cargo to vessels, ship captains do not need to know more than the basics about the cargo they are transporting. A vessel will never be assigned more tickets than it can carry, though if assigned less, it may be permitted to accept Open Tickets. The guidelines below are only meant to be a general system, and obviously does not cover all the types of cargo a freighter may find itself transporting.

▼ ASSIGN PICK UP AND DROP OFF POINT TYPES

The start and end points of a cargo run affect how much cargo is available for that run. There are four general location types. **Remote** locations do not have regular cargo runs. **Normal** locations experience a reasonable amount of traffic. **High Traffic** locations lie on major cargo routes. **Restricted** locations are off-limits, and any cargo runs involving the location are one-time deals only. Gamemasters will have to determine the types themselves based on campaign locations, but most locations traveled to will generally be Normal to High Traffic. Most Belt locations are considered Remote. Titan is Restricted.

▼ DETERMINE CARGO CONTENTS

Standard Cargo Tickets are assumed to be assigned from Logistics. Tickets that produce a type of cargo that cannot be carried by the vessel (not including cargo modules, as these will be swapped) should be rerolled. Two dice are rolled in the standard fashion (i.e., take the highest single-die result, adding +1 to the total if the result is two sixes). Make one roll on each column. **Hazardous** cargo poses a threat to the transporting ship and crew. **Secure** cargo cannot be accessed by anybody other than the owner. **Specialty** cargo has unique requirements for transportation. The Size is given in standard Guild cargo module of 2000 m³ volume. A Ticket may not be refused if the "Refusable?" result is "No."

Die Roll	Type	Qualifier	Size	Refusable?
1 or less	Gas	Hazardous	1	No
2	Gas	Secure	1	No
3	Liquid	Normal	1	No
4	Dry/Bulk	Normal	2	Yes
5	Liquid	Normal	2	Yes
6	Dry/Bulk	Specialty	3	Yes
7 or more	Passengers	Hazardous	4	Yes

Modifiers to "Size" and "Refusable?" rolls are based on the Pick-Up and Drop-Off Points Types. A modifier is added for each. Restricted: -2, Remote: -1, Normal: 0, High Traffic + 1

▼ DETERMINE CARGO MASS

Technically, the cargo mass (particularly with gasses) will vary greatly, but for the sake of this system, they are reduced to standard amounts. It is assumed that each cargo module is full. Passengers are a negligible weight in comparison to the mass of the Passenger Cargo Module. If using non-standard modules, multiply the module volume by the Volume Multiplier below to get cargo mass in tons.

Type	Volume Multiplier	Cargo Mass	Cargo Module Mass	Total Mass
Gas	0.5	1000 tons	17 tons	1017 tons
Liquid	1	2000 tons	17 tons	2017 tons
Bulk/Dry	1.5	3000 tons	7.5 tons	3007.5 tons
Passengers	0.06 tons per passenger	negligible	350 tons	350 tons

▼ WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

Here are some suggestions of cargo types if PCs absolutely must know what they are transporting.

Roll	Type	Passengers	Gas	Liquid	Bulk/Dry
1-2	Normal	Tourists	Helium	Water	Raw minerals
3-4	Hazardous	Quarantine	Hydrogen	Specialized Fuel	Radioactives, explosives
5	Secure	Prisoners	Patented formula	Reactor Coolant	Weapons
6	Specialty	Animals	Neon	Concentrated Fruit Juice	Food/Pharmaceuticals

FREIGHTER SYSTEMS DESIGN GUIDELINES

5.9

ENGINES ▼

5.9.1

$$\text{Vessel's Modified Top Speed in MPs} = (\text{Total Drive Section Mass} \times \text{Total Drive Section MPs}) / (\text{Total Drive Section Mass} + \text{Mass of the Rest of the Ship} + \text{Cargo Mass})$$

Mass is in tons. If a section's mass is not known, find the Size Rating on the chart on page 132 of the **Jovian Chronicles Rulebook** and select a mass in the listed range. Designers may instead want to use the freighter's Maximum Load (see below) to determine the Drive Section's total number of MPs, then use the above formula to determine the Modified Top Speed for the freighter's empty mass — that is, the mass of everything except cargo. This Empty Top Speed is generally quite high.

MAXIMUM LOAD AND CARGO MASS ▼

5.9.2

$$\text{Maximum Load} = \text{Total Drive Section Mass} \times \text{Total Drive Section MPs} / \text{Minimum Top Speed in MPs}$$

Maximum Cargo Mass = Maximum Load – (The total mass of all ship sections including drive sections)

Freighters with single-section hulls use the ship's entire mass and Top Speed MPs for the drive section numbers. If the drive sections' total mass is known, MP values for drive section and minimum Top Speed can be arbitrarily plugged in until an adequate Maximum Load is determined. Do not use fractional MPs.

The **water standard** is the most common method of estimating the mass a cargo hold will carry. One cubic meter of water masses extremely close to one ton. Designers equate the volume of a given cargo hold directly into tons; for example, a 2000 cubic meter hold can carry 2000 tons of cargo. The water standard is not normally applied to passenger space, as the mass of a cabin changes very little when occupied.

EXTERNAL CONTAINER DESIGN ▼

5.9.3

LABORATORY: CREW LOUNGE ♦

GAMEMASTER'S NOTE:



► COMMERCIAL SPACECRAFT ECONOMICS

Crew breakdowns are approximate; specific requirements depend on the individual ship. General crew includes all non-engineering, non-passenger service crewmembers. Crew Days are based on Life Support Limit if passengers are carried. Max Load is based on the optional rule on page 72. Fuel Costs are in credits and based on prices on page 74. Numbers have been rounded up to the nearest two significant digits. Some numbers have been adjusted from the crafts' original appearance to take reaction mass and water standards into account.

Atlas OTV (Mechanical Catalogue, p. 123):

Guild Role: Ship-to-station cargo transfers only.

Crew:	1 (pilot/engineer)	Deployment Range: 300 hours	Crew Days: 13
Passengers:	None	Life Support Limit: 3	Lounge? No
Cargo:	Internal: 50 m ³	External: Variable	Max Load: 690 tons
Fuel:	Type: Hydrogen (200 BPs)	Cost for Full Load: 2.6	Cost per BP: 0.01
Top Accel:	Empty: 2.8 g (28 MP)	Max Load: 0.2 g (2 MP)	Max Load EBPs: 14

Caravan-Class Medium Freighter (this book, p. 84):

Guild Role: Interplanetary cargo transport, occasionally used to courier critical cargoes. Available for charters.

Crew:	9 (5 general, 4 drive techs)	Deployment Range: 3000 hours	Crew Days: 2500
Passengers:	Variable	Life Support Limit: 20	Lounge? Yes
Cargo:	Internal: 1600 m ³	External: 12 x variable	Max Load: 35,000 tons
Fuel:	Type: Hydrogen (40,000 BPs)	Cost for Full Load: 19,000	Cost per BP: 0.47
Top Accel:	Empty: 3.9 g (39 MP)	Max Load: 0.2 g (2 MP)	Max Load EBPs: 1000

Delphin-Class Quickship (Mechanical Catalogue Two, p. 36):

Guild Role: Courier, with a small number refitted as ESR vessels. Standard model available for charters.

Crew:	2 (1 pilot, 1 drive tech)	Deployment Range: 1000 hours	Crew Days: 167
Passengers:	2	Life Support Limit: 4	Lounge? No
Cargo:	Internal: 20 m ³	External: None	Max Load: 2,115 tons
Fuel:	Type: Hydrogen (6000 BPs)	Cost for Full Load: 1200	Cost per BP: 0.19
Top Accel:	Empty: 4.9 g (49 MP)	Max Load: 0.2 g (2 MP)	Max Load EBPs: 245

Ebiiru-Class Cargo Hauler (Mechanical Catalogue, p. 108):

Guild Role: Bulk cargo transport, used mainly in locations where processed hydrogen is scarce.

Crew:	12, (8 general, 4 drive techs)	Deployment Range: 5000 hours	Crew Days: 8334
Passengers:	Variable	Life Support Limit: 40	Lounge? No
Cargo:	Internal: 6000 m ³	External: variable	Max Load: 69,100 tons *
Fuel:	Type: Water (50,000 BPs)	Cost for Full Load: 340,000	Cost per BP: 6.8
Top Accel:	Empty: 1.7 g (17 MP)	Max Load: 0.2 g (2 MP)	Max Load EBPs: 833

* adjusted from original

Inari-Class Passenger Liner (Jovian Chronicles Rulebook, p. 200):

Guild Role: Combined interplanetary cargo and passenger transport. Available for charters.

Crew:	36 (14 gen, 12 drive techs, 10 stewards)	Deploy Rng: 3000 hours	Crew Days: 50,000
Passengers:	Variable	Life Support Limit: 400	Lounge? Yes
Cargo:	Internal: 20,000 m ³	External: 2 x Variable	Max Load: 80,000 tons *
Fuel:	Type: Hydrogen (13,000 BPs)	Cost for Full Load: 21,000	Cost per BP: 1.6
Top Accel:	Empty: 0.4 g (4 MP)	Max Load: 0.2 g (2 MP)	Max Load EBPs: 1000

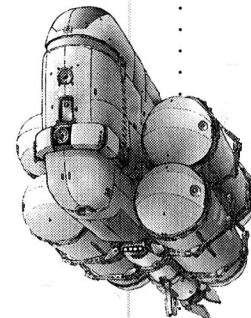
* adjusted from original

Mule-Class Bulk Freighter (Jovian Chronicles Rulebook, p. 202):

Guild Role: Bulk interplanetary cargo transport, with occasional passengers. Available for charters.

Crew:	16 (10 general crew, 6 drive techs)	Deployment Range: 1000 hours	Crew Days: 830
Passengers:	Variable	Life Support Limit: 20	Lounge? No
Cargo	Internal: 500 m ³	External: 4 x variable	Max Load: 16,500 tons *
Fuel	Type: Hydrogen (6000 BPs)	Cost for Full Load: 1100	Cost per BP: 0.18
Top Accel:	Empty: 2.3 g (23 MP)	Max Load: 0.2 g (2 MP)	Max Load EBP: 75

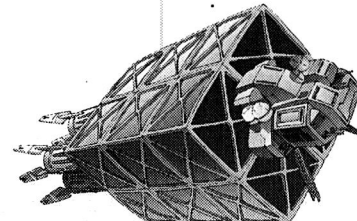
* adjusted from original



Panama-Class Barge (Mechanical Catalogue Two, p. 46):

Guild Role: Bulk interplanetary cargo transport, mainly for raw materials.

Crew:	8 (5 general crew, 3 drive techs)	Deployment Range: 3000 hours	Crew Days: 1000
Passengers:	None	Life Support Limit: 8	Lounge? No
Cargo	Internal: 100 m ³	External: 8 x 20,000 m ³	Max Load: 240,000 tons
Fuel	Type: Hydrogen (60,000 BP)	Cost for Full Load: 110,000	Cost per BP: 1.8
Top Accel:	Empty: 6.7 g (67 MP)	Max Load: 0.2 g (2 MP)	Max Load EBP: 1500

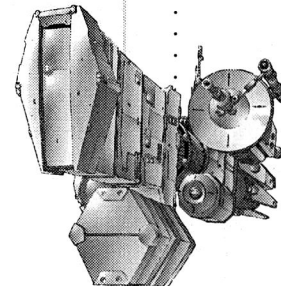


Scout Ship (Mechanical Catalog, p. 102):

Guild Role: Charter vessel for survey and exploration.

Crew:	8 (7 general crew, 1 drive tech)	Deployment Range: 4000 hours	Crew Days: 3334
Passengers:	Variable	Life Support Limit: 20	Lounge? No
Cargo	Internal: None	External: 1 x 20,000 m ³	Max Load: 20,000 tons
Fuel	Type: Hydrogen (11,000 BPs)	Cost for Full Load: 1000	Cost per BP: 0.09
Top Accel:	Empty: 0.3 g (3 MP)	Max Load: 0.2 g (2 MP)	Max Load EBP: 2200

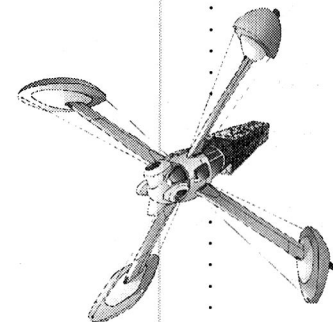
* adjusted from original



Seraph Solar Sail /Ophan Magsail Barge (Mechanical Catalog Two, pp. 29-33):

Role: Both function as bulk cargo transport. The Seraph operates only out to the orbit of Mars.

Crew:	10 (6 general crew, 4 drive techs)	Deployment Range: 5000 hours	Crew Days: 14,000
Passengers:	64	Life Support Limit: 64	Lounge? Yes
Cargo	Internal: None	External: varies	Max Load: 56,000 tons
Fuel	Type: Solar (unlimited BPs)	Cost for Full Load: Free!	Cost per BP: n/a
Top Accel:	Empty: varies, low	Max Load: varies, lower	Max Load EBP: n/a



Cargo Modules (this book, pp. 84-85):

Deployment Range for all Modules is 1000 hours except for the Panama Cargo module, which is 3000 hours. The Standard Guild Passenger Module carries a Lounge. Mass is the empty module mass in tons.

Module	Cargo Capacity	Mass	Notes
Mule Bulk Cargo	Internal: 4000 m ³	82 tons	No Life Support
Mule Cargo and Passenger	Internal: 4000 m ³ , plus passengers	230 tons	Full Life Support
	Life Support Limit: 40 (2 Stewards)		Crew Days: 1700
Std Guild Dry Cargo	Internal: 2000 m ³	7.5 tons	No Life Support
Std Guild Tankage	Internal: 2000 m ³ (liquefied gasses)	17 tons	No Life Support
Std Guild Passenger	Life Support Limit: 60 (2 Stewards)	350 tons	Crew Days: 2500
Std Inari Cargo	Internal: 30,000 m ³	770 tons	Full Life Support
Std Inari Tankage	Internal: 40,000 m ³ (liquefied gasses)	120 tons	No Life Support
Std Panama Cargo	Internal: 20,000 m ³	53 tons	No Life Support

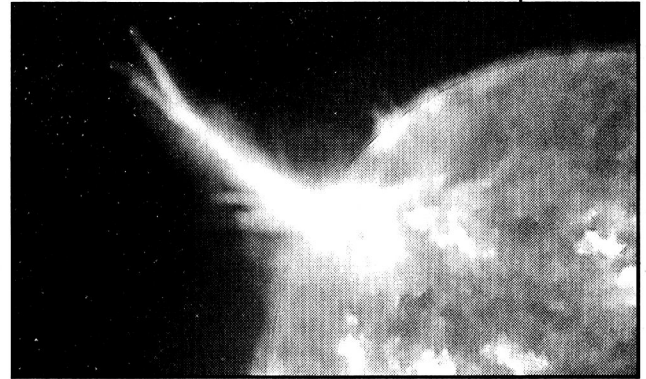


"Prometheus did not give us the secret of fire. Fire already existed. He gave us something much more valuable: the secret of matches."

– Hammond Van Soest, Solar Dynamics Engineer

THE POWER OF THE SUN ◀

Mercury's proximity to the Sun is both a blessing and a curse. The planet is poised to take best advantage of the biggest power source in local space, even though the smallest hiccup from that same source could incinerate most living matter on and around the planet. Mercurian science, thankfully, has achieved some impressive breakthroughs that have minimized all but the most severe solar threats. High temperature materials engineering is a constantly expanding field: there is an endless need for new substances that can withstand the hellish temperatures while remaining versatile enough to be used as more than thermal shielding. Many of Mercury's developments have been successfully applied in smaller environments, such as fusion reactor and plasma drive components.



CATCHING RAYS ▼

Mercurians are the acknowledged masters of solar power applications. Their reliance on the sun has pushed the boundaries of this technology much farther than any other solar nation. The global network of solar collector farms is more than capable of meeting the entire nation's power needs. A backup network of nuclear reactors exists, but has never been required to deliver more than minimal power during its operational history. Mercury has been careful to develop a solar technology useable by other nations. Mercury's close proximity to the sun does not require a great degree of sensitivity or efficiency, but these are exactly the traits needed by those living farther out. As a result, Mercurian solar cells can be found almost anywhere, including THC facilities around Titan. Mercury has made no attempt to hide the fact that the physics behind the advances is rather straightforward. The key actually lies in the materials technology, which most solar nations have had little success in duplicating.

TECHNOLOGY NOTE: BATTERIES ◇

Mercury-based solar collectors would be only half as efficient were it not for advances in energy storage devices. Deep beneath each solar farm, a bunker houses several massive battery arrays that are more than capable of storing the energy collected from a full 88 days of solar exposure. The exact composition of the batteries is still secret, but it is rumored that they do not use any of the standard electrochemical configurations, and they can store a charge almost indefinitely. The Mercurian paranoia surrounding its power distribution has so far kept foreign agents from discovering the batteries' secrets.

BENDING RAYS ▼

Without magnetic shielding — magshields — radiation from solar flares and other sources such as Jupiter would make prolonged habitation of space much more difficult and expensive, and space travel potentially lethal. Mercurian ship-mounted magshields can, on average, negate up to 10,000 rads per hour. This is a rate not usually seen outside of military vessels in other solar nations. The Mercurian orbital colonies have some of the best heavy magshields in the Solar System. The projected fields have been engineered to create a safe-harbor envelope along the axis of the station, extending outwards roughly 1 kilometer. Intense solar activity can reduce the size of this envelope, but the technology has so far dealt with the worst the sun has had to offer without compromising station safety.

TECHNOLOGY NOTE: FIELDS AND SHIELDS ◀

Recent research supports several older Jovian theories that magshields could be developed into classic science fiction force fields. There are, however, considerable obstacles to overcome, not the least of which is the sheer power required to generate a physical barrier of cohesive energy. So far, only colony cylinders have been able to generate magshield fields rated higher than 100,000 rads. The proposed demands of a force field for a single average-sized exo-armor, assuming a spherical barrier only slightly larger than the exo's height, would require the maximum output of 12 colony cylinders. Until this problem is overcome, force fields will remain a distant holy grail of applied energy physics.

► PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Mercury is a high-tech society that satisfies most needs for manufactured goods internally. Almost any item not restricted to a specific nation can be obtained, although the isolated nature of Mercury may make some goods ridiculously expensive. Personal firearms are generally unavailable planetside. What little selection reaches civilian hands generally consists of stunners and non-lethal weapons similar to what the CPS uses. On the other hand, there is no shortage of survival and damage control gear, the carrying of which is actively and openly encouraged in some areas.

The following list contains only those items that are either uniquely Mercurian or adapted to the setting. Players can find a much larger listing in the **Space Equipment Handbook**. Although prices are given in both Ration Points (RP) and standard credits, local merchants prefer to avoid the use of foreign currency, and charge a handling fee of 10 to 15% on all transactions conducted with any legal tender other than RP. Items can be requisitioned from Guild stores by a PC for no cost; however, the PC is responsible for keeping the item in good condition. Repairs and replacement costs incurred will be deducted from the PCs' Guild salary.

◇ EMERGENCY SURFACE SHELTER

This shelter is designed for one function: temperature control. When assembled, it forms a small dome four meters in diameter. A centrally located unit functions as both life support and either as a heating or cooling unit, depending on the time of day. The material is puncture resistant, and can be pressurized, but most users prefer to hook their vacuum suits up to the shelter's central life support unit via umbilicals. The shelter is designed for dusk, dawn or nighttime use; it cannot withstand the heat of a Mercurian day. It occupies one cubic meter when collapsed, and it can be erected or dismantled in two minutes — an internal domed framework springs into shape. The shelter has no airlock, although it does have fittings for a portable airlock to be attached. The shelter must be completely depressurized before anyone can enter or exit.

◇ PERSONAL BEACON

This is the Mercurian version of the Personal Emergency Locator Transceiver (PELT). Like the PELT, it acts as a radio beacon, allowing endangered people to be easily located. Unlike a PELT, the beacon constantly transmits the wearer's name and personal ID, allowing the wearer to be tracked within most installations. The beacons cannot be turned off, but under normal conditions the signal is weak and short-ranged. Each beacon has a panic button which boosts the signal strength and also transmits an emergency code. All citizens and visitors to Mercury are issued with beacons, and are expected to wear them at all times except when within a sanctuary or personal residence. Citizens in underground facilities do not generally wear their beacons unless they are out on the surface of the planet. Standard batteries need replacement every three months if the panic button is not used. The panic button signal will use up a fresh battery in three days.

◇ ACTION PACKS

Since all citizens are required to render assistance to others during an emergency, most carry belt pouches outfitted with a variety of emergency items. All packs contain a spare personal beacon, spray foam sealer, air motion meter for detecting air leaks and a small first aid kit — at their most basic containing bandages, gauze and burn ointment. The Guild requires all personnel, whether Bonded or not, to carry these packs at all times and most have retained the habit. The only Mercurians likely to be caught without an action pack are children. Action Packs are available anywhere on Mercury. The standards governing quality are very high — it is rare to get a 'bad' pack. All Mercurian slip suits (see next page) are designed to carry action packs.

◇ RATION CARD

This is actually a 'smart card,' an elementary computer embedded into a 4 cm by 10 cm wafer of plastic. Ration cards function as money, and can carry up to 5000 RP in a non-volatile memory storage unit. The card itself is unpowered, and relies on a card reader to supply the energy to allow the onboard microchip to make transactions. Although the card requires a thumbprint scan and a manually input code for verification, the actual security on the card is rather unsophisticated. Most Mercurians use ration cards to carry petty cash and rely on other, more secure methods to make large transactions. Ration cards are valuable only within Mercurian borders. Mercurians traveling abroad must exchange RPs for credits, as other solar nations do not accept ration cards or RPs as legal tender. Ration cards are available at any Mercurian bank.

SKIN TINTS ◇

This creation is based on the chemical bechtethyn, which temporarily increases the human body's resistance to radiation, but as a side effect turns the outer layers of skin a bright orange. Some minor alterations have produced a wide range of colors, the most popular being green, gray and purple. The Administration has banned colors resembling medical conditions. A single dose acts as the Radiation Resistance Character Perk (**Jovian Chronicles Companion**, page 26) for twelve hours, although the skin coloration may linger for up to eight days.

SLICKERS (MERCURIAN SLIP SUITS) ◇

This emergency vacuum suit is light, comfortable and can be worn much like a set of heavy clothing. The slip suit is thin enough to be worn under a normal vacuum suit with minimal discomfort. The Guild adapted these suits from the Nomads, who consider them vital to survival and wear them constantly. The slip suit responds to rapid pressure changes, going rigid to prevent decompression damage. A hood secures over the head to function as a helmet. If gloves are not worn, hands pull into the sleeves and the cuffs seal to form airtight mittens. A ten-minute oxygen supply is contained within the suit itself. Slip suits are puncture and tear resistant, but they do not provide armor or radiation protection. They are intended only to give the wearer some extra time to reach safety. If worn, a slip suit can be pressure sealed in 1 combat round (6 seconds) with a successful Survival: Space Skill Test. Failure adds 1 round and a botch adds 3. A person can dress in a slip suit in a number of rounds equal to 8 minus his Agility (AGI).

SUNGLASSES ◇

For some reason, sunglasses made on Mercury tend to outsell sunglasses made anywhere else in the Solar System. Most Mercurian sunglasses are no different than any other brand, save for their place of manufacture. Nevertheless, designer eyewear companies from as far away as the Jovian Confederacy buy their lenses exclusively from fabrication facilities in Mercurian orbit and ship them directly to their factories at no small expense. Mercurians do not normally wear sunglasses, and find the entire fad rather amusing.

EQUIPMENT SUMMARY ◇

Name	Weight	Cost (Credits/RP)	Availability
Emergency Surface Shelter	40 kg	2000/900	Uncommon
Personal Beacon	0.25 kg	Free	Very Common
Action Pack	2 kg	110/50	Common
Ration Card	Negligible	5/2	Common
Skin Tint (10 doses)	Negligible	5-25/2-11	Common
Slicker	2 kg, negligible when worn	750-1000/300-450	Uncommon
Sunglasses	Negligible	50-500/20-225	Rare on Mercury

► STANDARDIZED CARGO CONTAINERS

Standardized Guild cargo containers are 10 x 10 x 20 meters in size. The Guild employs a wide variety of containers, but all have dimensions in 10 meter increments to take advantage of standardized locking clamp configurations. Most Guild ships operating at the Dispatch level are designed to carry standardized 2000 m³ containers. It is possible for a container's deployment range not to match the deployment range of the carrying vessel. This means the container's maintenance requirements are different from those of the ship. Containers carry no armament and have no engines.

▼ GDCC2000 DRY CARGO CONTAINER

This is the basic model, essentially a large metal box with one or two large bay doors for loading cargo. The container is not pressurized, and cannot be entered without proper environmental protection.

▣ PRODUCTION DATA

Cost in Credits (Threat Value)	130,000 (260)	Crew (Actions)	0 (0)
Hull Size (Individual Lemon Dice)	6 (3)	Armor (Light/Heavy/Overkill)	10/20/30
Movement Data	Towed by Drive Section	Deployment Range	1000 hours
Sensors	N/A	Communications	N/A
Fire Control	-5		

▣ PERKS AND FLAWS DATA

Name	Rating	Game Effect
Cargo Bay	-	2000 m ³ , 20 x 10 x 10 meters
Hostile Environment Protection	4	Extreme Heat, Radiation (4), Vacuum
No Communications	-	Cannot communicate
No Sensors	-	Cannot perform active scans

▼ GHM2000 HABITAT MODULE

Transporting people requires additional considerations. Configurable internal compartments can be arranged as small cabins or luxury staterooms. Module life support and power generation systems are completely self-contained. The module has an up/down orientation, even though passengers are weightless when the ship is not under thrust. Crew consists of a technician and several stewards, all of whom live in the module itself.

▣ PRODUCTION DATA

Cost in Credits (Threat Value)	880,000 (2900)	Crew (Actions)	2 (3)
Hull Size (Individual Lemon Dice)	23 (3)	Armor (Light/Heavy/Overkill)	40/80/120
Movement Data	Towed by Drive Section	Deployment Range	1000 hours
Sensors	N/A	Communications	-3/5 km
Fire Control	-5		

▣ PERKS AND FLAWS DATA

Name	Rating	Game Effect
Backup Systems	-	Communications and Life Support only
Cargo Bay	-	112 m ³ , Ship's stores
Ejection System	-	Escape Pods, 60 people
Hostile Environmental Protection	4	Extreme Heat, Radiation (4), Vacuum
Laboratory: Well-Stocked Lounge	2	+2 to passenger morale
Life Support	-	Full, for 60 passengers and module crew
No Engines	-	Must be towed
No Sensors	-	Cannot perform active scans
Passenger Accommodations	-	1500 m ³ , variable configurations
Sick Bay	2	2 bed infirmary
Vulnerable to Haywire Effects	-	Electrical attacks double intensity

GTC2000 TANKAGE MODULE ▼

This is a storage container for substances in a liquid or gaseous state. The larger hull size represents internal compartments designed to minimize potential damage from hazardous materials. Personnel access to the module's interior is generally not possible unless the module is completely empty.

6.3.3

PRODUCTION DATA □

Cost in Credits (Threat Value)	120,000 (280)
Crew (Actions)	0 (0)
Hull Size (Individual Lemon Dice)	8 (3)
Armor (Light/Heavy/Overkill)	16/32/48
Movement Data	Towed by Drive Section
Deployment Range	1000 hours
Sensors	N/A
Communications	N/A
Fire Control	-5

PERKS AND FLAWS DATA □

Name	Rating	Game Effect
Cargo Bay (Tankage)	-	2000 m ³ , 20 x 10 x 10 meters
Hostile Environment Protection	4	Extreme Heat, Radiation (4), Vacuum
No Communications	-	Cannot communicate
No Sensors	-	Cannot perform active scans

GSC HANGAR MODULE ▼

These are designed to provide freighters with some form of defense when no escort vessels are available. A single module accommodates 6 exo-suits, 2 fighters, or 1 exo-armor of Size 12 or less, and functions as an elementary space traffic control center. Hangar space allows moderate repairs (-1 to Tech Tests) except when carrying an exo-armor (-2 to Tech Tests). Crews are also housed on the module to avoid over-taxing the carrying freighter's life support. Hangar modules are distinctly marked as carrying armed vehicles out of consideration for Guild customers. Large freighters are equipped with one or two modules if they are operating in regions of known pirate activity.

6.3.4

PRODUCTION DATA □

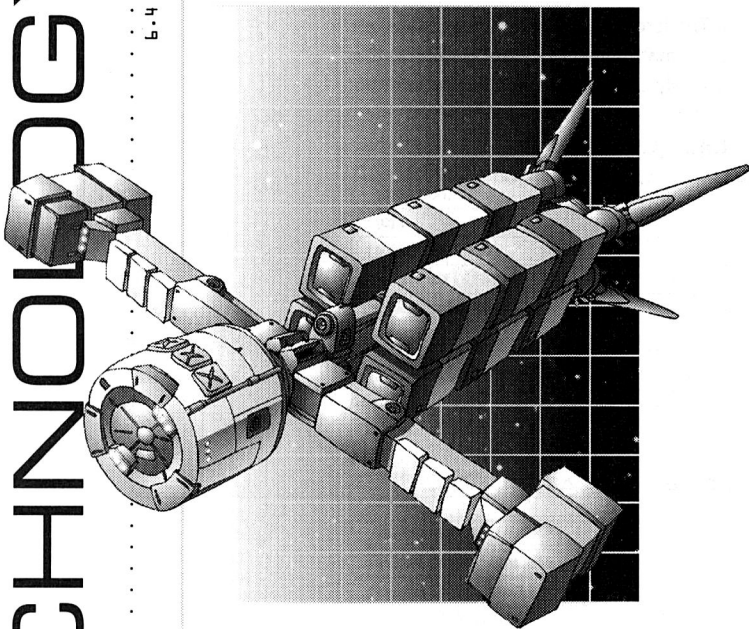
Cost in Credits (Threat Value)	1,400,000 (2200)
Crew (Actions)	6 (4)
Hull Size (Individual Lemon Dice)	20 (3)
Armor (Light/Heavy/Overkill)	40/60/80
Movement Data	Towed by Drive Section
Deployment Range	1000 hours
Sensors	-1/2 km
Communications	-1/10 km
Fire Control	-5

PERKS AND FLAWS DATA □

Name	Rating	Game Effect
Backup Systems	-	Communications, Fire Control, Life Support, Sensors
Cargo Bay (Vehicle Storage)	-	1300 m ³ , variable configurations
Catapult	1	(150/mass) m/s ² acceleration
Crew Accommodations	-	500 m ³ , 10 doubles
Ejection System	6	Escape Pods, 20 places
Hostile Environment Protection	4	Radiation (4), Vacuum
Life Support	-	Full, for 20 crew
Reinforced Crew Compartment	-	Ignores first Crew hit
Tool Arm	12	Vehicle retrieval, cannot punch

end of section 6.3 cargo containers

B-4



► CARAVAN-CLASS MEDIUM FREIGHTER

Name:	Caravan
Origin:	Various (Mercury)
Manufacturer:	Various
Type:	Freighter
Control System:	Bridge
Length:	120 m
Width:	100 m
Empty Weight:	1900 tons
Loaded Weight:	29,000 tons*
Main Drive:	4 MW
Secondary Power Plant:	2200 KW
Main Thrusters:	4 x 2,175,000 kg
Apogee Motors:	20
Acceleration:	0.3 g*
Onboard Sensors:	Fire Control Radar, Infrared/Ultraviolet, Lidar, Low-light, Magnetometer, Microwaves, Motion Detectors, Radcounter, Survey Sensors, Telescope
Fixed Armament:	Point Defense System
Additional Armament:	None
Defensive Systems:	Mag Screen
Equipment:	Cargo Module Handpoints, Escape Pods, Satellite Uplink

* With 24,000 tons of cargo

▼ OVERVIEW

B-4.1

Caravans are the Merchant Guild's Dispatch-level workhorses. They supplement Ebiiru cargo haulers in high-population areas such as the Jovian States or Earth Orbital space, although Caravans may replace their larger cousins in sparsely populated areas with minimal cargo traffic. The Caravan is a small freighter with low crew levels and operating costs, and is popular with private shipping companies who cannot afford the Ebiiru or guarantee enough cargo for a Mule. Caravans are used by the Guild as interplanetary express couriers, but the solar sail or magsail vessels of the Transit Fleets are much more economical for long-range trips. Numerous shipyards, including several in Earth space, have licenses to produce the Caravan.

▼ CAPABILITIES

B-4.2

The Caravan is designed to be an endurance vessel, and can be easily identified by its rotating crew section, a feature not found on most similar-sized freighters. It also sports modularized systems, simplifying maintenance and modifications. Crew levels are low, typically consisting of four bridge officers and two to four drive techs, plus any crew required by specialized cargo containers such as habitat modules or hazardous materials containers. The ship can carry up to twelve standard cargo containers of any type. Container access is through the central structural spar that forms the spine of the ship; some have been modified to carry more containers, but this strains the superstructure when the ship is under thrust. Two manipulator arms are available to couple and uncouple the cargo containers. To save on the wear and tear, most captains prefer to let a port's own auxiliary vessels move the containers. Belt-based Guild-operated Caravans usually carry a single hangar module as well, equipped with either a pair of fighters or a squadron of exo-suits.

▼ SERVICE RECORD

B-4.3

The Caravan has served the Guild for 22 years, and has been operated by private commercial interests for almost as long. Its modular systems have allowed vessels to remain viable through upgrade packages, available to replace and refit everything up to and including entire drive sections. This comes as a welcome opportunity to private ship owners, who would otherwise have to replace the entire vessel when it becomes obsolete. Several Jovian shipyards have created their own versions, which differ from the Caravan only cosmetically. The Guild has lodged several protests, but the 'pirated' Caravans continue to be produced. They have not been limited to merchant use. SolaPol has purchased two dozen of these vessels, most of which are used as repair and resupply ships for remote stations or patrol cruisers on long-term deployment. The remaining few have been modified as 'Q-ships,' covert vessels designed to supplement anti-piracy or anti-smuggling operations. CEGA has deployed modified Caravans in a similar covert operations mode. One such vessel was apprehended by a SolaPol Q-ship after it wandered into a smuggling sting operation.

CREW COMMENTS ▼

"The *Masotta*, now that was a helluva ship. Stripped down and locked down, she could pull a hair over four gees. Of course it was hell on the engines, sucked up the fuel, and you were damn lucky if that's all that happened. Those Caravans, they're just not made for that kind of acceleration. But Cappy Jackson, he always seemed to have more than enough luck for everyone. Good thing, too, because he always got us into places where we needed it.

"Back in the days when I served on the *Masotta*, we worked the Belt-side of the Mars run. There was money to be made selling guns to the righteous, no matter who they might be. We would start with one side, and keep going until the other side found out what we were up to, so then we would switch for a while. Oh, how they hated us, but since regular trade hadn't been able to keep up with the war effort, they had no choice but to put up with us. Funny thing — we got into the most trouble whenever we tried to do something honest.

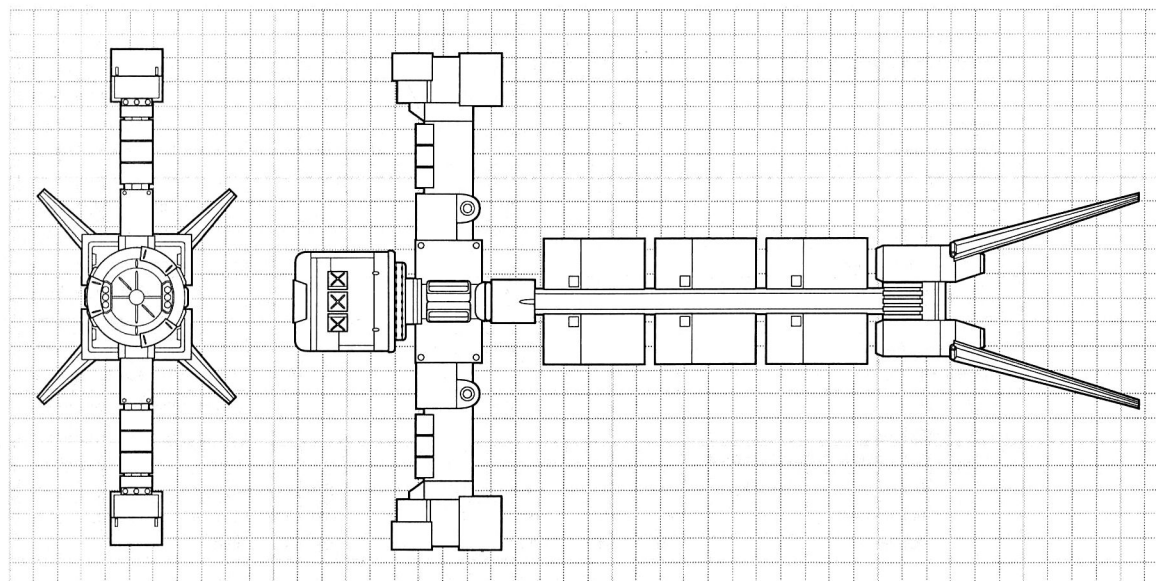
"Cappy, he was a bit of a strange sort. He'd get these attacks of guilt, and the next thing you know, you'd find yourself loading up on food and first aid kits to give to the folks who just bought your last shipment of guns. Of course, it would always work out the same. We'd coast into Mars orbit like the cavalry coming in, broadcasting our ID like a trumpet call. And of course, neither side would be expecting us, so they'd think we'd brought guns for the other side, and they'd come swarming up in their homemade warships to try to take us into "custody" or shoot us down.

"We knew the routine as well as they did, so we always came in with the habitat section secured from rotation and everything locked down for high thrust. Cappy always had this hope that we could unload peacefully, but when the battle boats show up on the sensors, it's time for me to eject the cargo and — FOOM! We burn our way out of there before they get us into weapons range. Four gees, hands down. Back to the Belt in record time, where we would spend the next week pulling burned out drive components and replacing them with parts from our helpful, local Guild supplier. I love modular parts. Takes all the work out of the work, if you know what I mean. But I could only take so much of that. After the third time, it was high time for me to move on.

"I hear Cappy went down over Mars a few months back. Another "humanitarian" run, except the *Masotta* lost a main structural support while she was pulling high gees. Folded almost in half before she broke apart. Martians didn't even have to fire a shot. Damn shame. I miss Cappy, but I am so very glad I was nowhere near him when his luck finally ran out."

- Sandra Dee, Freelance Drive Tech

SHIP SCHEMATICS ▼



PRODUCTION DATA

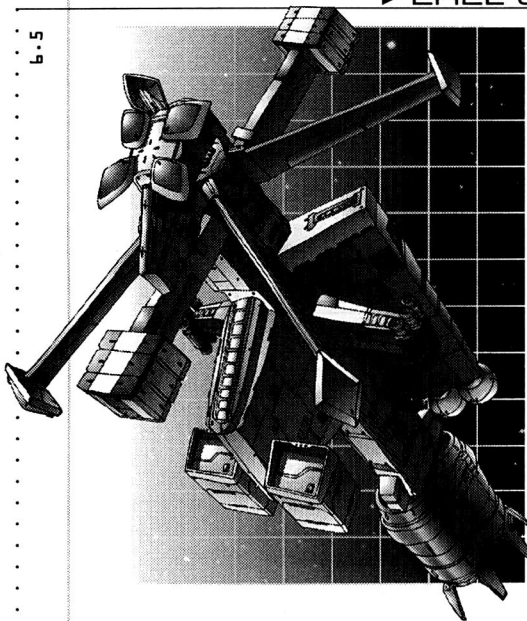
Threat Value	29,000										
Offensive	3400										
Defensive	4410										
Miscellaneous	69,000										
Cost (credits)	22,000,000										
Production Type	Early Production										
Indv. Lemon Dice	3										
Sections	Size										
1 x Main Hull (includes cargo tree)	1 x 30										
1 x Rotating Habitat	1 x 19										
Up to 12 x Standard Guild Containers	Varies, 35,000 tons max mass										
4 x Drive Section	4 x 20										
MOVEMENT DATA											
Movement Mode	Combat Speed			Top Speed			Maneuver				
Space (Empty)	20 (2.0 g)			39 (3.9 g)			-4				
Space (Loaded with 24,000 tons of cargo)	2 (0.2 g)			3 (0.3 g)			-6				
Space (Loaded with 35,000 tons of cargo)	1 (0.1 g)			2 (0.2 g)			-6				
Deployment Range	3000 hours										
Reaction Mass (Empty)	16,000 BPs (equivalent)										
Reaction Mass (Loaded with 24,000 tons of cargo)	1500 BPs (equivalent)										
Reaction Mass (Loaded with 35,000 tons of cargo)	500 BPs (equivalent)										
OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS											
1 x PDS											
Main Hull (includes cargo tree)											
Cost (credits)	3,500,000										
Crew	4										
Actions	4										
Hull Size	30										
Default Size	18										
Stacking Size	30										
Individual Lemon Dice	3										
ARMOR											
Light/Heavy/Overkill	60/120/180										
Movement Data	Towed by Drive Section										
Deployment Range	3000 hours										
Sensors	0/2 km										
Communications	0/10 km										
Fire Control	-1										
PERKS AND FLAWS DATA											
Name	Rating					Game Effect					
Autopilot	-					Acts as Level 1 Pilot					
Backup Systems	-					Communications, Fire Control, Life Support, Sensors					
Cargo Hold	-					1568 m^3, Ship's stores					
Computer	2					CRE -2, KNO 1, PP 2					
Ejection System	-					Escape Pods, 20 places					
Exposed Auxiliary Systems	-					AUX damage treated as 1 stage worse					
HEP: Radiation	4					10,000 rads per hour					
HEP: Vacuum	-					Space protection					
Large Sensor Profile	2					Completely non-stealthy					
Life Support	-					Full, for 20 crew					
2 x Tool Arm	30					Cargo handlers, cannot punch					
Satellite Uplink	-					Multiplies Commo range by 1000 km					
OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE SYSTEM DATA											
Qty	Name	Fire Arc	DM	BR	Acc	ROF	Ammo	Special	MS	WC	AC
1	PDS (ranged)	T	X8	1	0	6	Inf	AM, HEAT	8	2850	n/a
	PDS (shield)	FF	X16	M	0	2	Inf	Def, Eshield, HEAT	3	128	n/a

ROTATING HABITAT SECTION

VEHICLE HULL DATA			
Cost (credits)	2,700,000		
Crew	1		
Actions	2		
Hull Size	19		
Default Size	15		
Stacking Size	19		
Individual Lemon Dice	3		
ARMOR			
Light/Heavy/Overkill	40/80/120		
Movement Data	Towed by Drive Section		
Deployment Range	3000 hours		
Sensors	-5/1 km		
Communications	-3/5 km		
Fire Control	-5		
PERKS AND FLAWS DATA			
Name	Rating	Game Effect	
Backup Systems	-	Communications and Life Support only	
Ejection System	-	Escape Pods, 20 places	
HEP: Radiation	4	10,000 rads per hour	
HEP: Vacuum	-	Space protection	
Laboratory: Well-Equipped Crew Lounge	2	-2 to abject boredom	
Life Support	-	Full, for 20 crew	
Crew Accommodation	-	1000 m^3, 4 singles, 8 doubles	
Reinforced Crew Compartment	-	Ignores first Crew hit	
OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE SYSTEM DATA			
None			
4 x Drive Section			
Cost (credits)	4,200,000		
Crew	1		
Actions	2		
Hull Size	20		
Default Size	17		
Stacking Size	20		
Individual Lemon Dice	3		
ARMOR			
Light/Heavy/Overkill	40/80/120		
MOVEMENT DATA			
Movement Mode	Combat Speed	Top Speed	Maneuver
Space	10 (1.0 g)	20 (2.0 g)	-4
Deployment Range	3000 hours		
Reaction Mass (Type)	10,000 BP		
Sensors	-5/1 km		
Communications	-3/5 km		
Fire Control	-5		
PERKS AND FLAWS DATA			
Name	Rating	Game Effect	
Backup System	-	Redundant Life Support	
Ejection System	-	Escape Pods, 4 places	
HEP: Radiation	4	10,000 rads per hour	
HEP: Vacuum	-	Space protection	
Life Support	-	Full, for 4 crew	
Reinforced Crew Compartment	-	Ignores first Crew hit	
Traceable Emissions	2	Unshielded Drive Flare	
OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE SYSTEM DATA			
None			
Notes			
The freighter's Threat Values and Cost Totals do not include any cargo containers that may be carried.			

end of section 6.4 caravan-class freighter

6.5



► EREL-CLASS CORVETTE

Name:	Erel (Wing/Sword)
Origin:	Mercury
Manufacturer:	Cacus Sunworks
Type:	Corvette
Control System:	Bridge (2 linked C&C modules)
Length:	275 m (75 m/200 m)
Width:	210 m (210 m/42 m)
Empty Weight:	3000 tons (1100 tons/1900 tons)
Loaded Weight:	3500 tons (1100 tons/2400 tons)
Main Drive:	Varies (Solar or Magsail/195 MW)
Secondary Power Plant:	Varies (1000KW/3500 KW)
Main Thrusters:	Varies (Solar or Magsail/2 x 600,000 kg, 4 x 300,000 kg)
Apogee Motors:	Varies (3-axis flywheel/50)
Acceleration:	Varies (Varies according to distance from sun/1.0 g)
Onboard Sensors:	Fire Control Radar, Infrared/Ultraviolet, Lidar, Low-light, Magnetometer, Microwaves, Motion Detectors, Radcounter, Search Radar, Telescope
Fixed Armament:	2 x Laser Cannon/ 2 x Beam Cannon
Additional Armament:	None/Exo-Armors, Fighters
Defensive Systems:	Mag Screen, Point Defense System
Equipment:	Catapults, Docking Clamps, Escape Pods, Satellite Uplink, Vehicle Bay

▼ OVERVIEW

6.5.1

Mercury has long used solar sail warships as convoy escorts, mainly to avoid the engine fatigue caused by continually firing thrusters at low power for weeks on end. These vessels are little more than mobile, heavily armed fortresses, which rely on carried fighters or exo-armors for interception capability. The warships are effective, but clever raiders could exploit the vessels' limited mobility. The Erel-Class Corvette represents a change in this philosophy, sparked by the desire to provide convoys with a much more dynamic defense. The Erel is a combination of two vessels. The main engine section, called the Wing, consists of a solar sail or magsail, plus a rotating habitat housing wardrooms, exercise facilities and crew quarters. The combat section, called the Sword, is an upgraded Bricriu-Class Corvette. The Wing tows the Sword until a threat appears. The Sword then disengages and moves to intercept, allowing the corvette to give pursuit if required.

▼ CAPABILITIES

6.5.2

All Wings are newly built ships, lightly armed and intended to be little more than tugs for the Sword. The crews are billeted on board the Wing, although the original quarters on the Sword are left largely intact for prolonged pursuits or independent patrols. Most Wings are magsail-equipped, though the Guild Security Corps maintains a small group of solar sailers. There is a proposal in the works to upgrade the Wing's offensive armament, essentially making it another 'flying fortress.'

The Swords are another demonstration of the remarkable versatility of the Bricriu. The kinetic kill cannon (KKC) turrets have been replaced with a hangar bay, allowing the vessel to function as an escort carrier. The entire drive section has been completely rebuilt, almost doubling the ship's acceleration — a nasty surprise for opponents expecting a slow, lumbering warship. The loss of the KKC's has affected the ship's long-range firepower, and another refit is being considered to correct the problem.

▼ SERVICE RECORD

6.5.3

The solar sail-driven Erel corvette is a last, living allegory to the golden age of sail. Even though magsails have replaced their slower, photon-powered cousins, Mercury enjoys promoting the image of its Erels flying to the rescue, a veritable fleet full of twenty-third century Horatio Nelsons come to defeat the hordes of evil, marauding pirates. While there is some truth to the carefully cultivated legends, typically the Erels see little action. The corvettes have been in service for almost twenty years, and corsairs long ago learned to recognize and respect (however grudgingly) the fact that it is not an unmaneuverable fire platform. Incidents of piracy against Guild convoys have dropped dramatically, the presence of even a single Erel enough to discourage potential raiders. On the other hand, while the corvettes may give pirates pause, they are still no match for modern warships. If anything, they are more vulnerable, since the Wing makes such a large target.

EREEL WING PRODUCTION DATA

Threat Value											16,000
Offensive											24,000
Defensive											820
Miscellaneous											24,500
Cost (credits)											14,000,000
Production Type											Early Production
Indv. Lemon Dice											3
Sections											Size
1 x Magsail or Solar Sail Main Hull											1 x 25
1 x Rotating Habitat Section											1 x 20
MOVEMENT DATA											
Movement Mode				Combat Speed			Top Speed			Maneuver	
Magsail/Solar Sail				varies			varies			-8	
Deployment Range										3000 hours	
Reaction Mass										0 BPs (equivalent)	
Offensive and Defensive Systems											
1 x PDS											
2 x Laser Cannon											
MAIN HULL (BOTH MAGSAIL AND SOLAR SAIL DATA PROVIDED)											
Cost (Magsail/Solar Sail) (credits)											12,000,000
Crew											10
Actions											5
Hull Size											25
Default Size											24
Stacking Size											25
Individual Lemon Dice											3
ARMOR											
Light/Heavy/Overkill											50/100/150
Movement Mode				Combat Speed			Top Speed			Maneuver	
Magsail/Solar Sail				varies			varies			-8	
Deployment Range										3000 hours	
Reaction Mass (Type)										0 BP	
Sensors										0/4 km	
Communications										0/10 km	
Fire Control										0	
PERKS & FLAWS DATA											
Name					Rating				Game Effect		
Autopilot					-				Acts as Level 1 Pilot		
Backup Systems					-				Communications, Fire Control, Life Support, Sensors		
Cargo Bay					-				1000 m^3, Ship's Stores		
Computer					3				CRE 0, KNO 0, PP 3		
Ejection System					-				Escape Pods, 10 places		
HEP: Extreme Heat					-				Extra radiators		
HEP: Radiation					4				10,000 rads per hour		
HEP: Vacuum					-				Space protection		
Large Sensor Profile (magsail)					4				Large electromagnetic signature		
Large Sensor Profile (solar sail)					6				Large reflective surfaces		
Life Support					-				Full, for 10 crew		
No Fuel (magsail)					-				Can be turned off		
No Fuel (solar sail)					-				Cannot be turned off		
Reinforced Crew Compartment					-				Ignores first Crew hit		
Satellite Uplink					-				Multiplies Commo range by 1000		
Tool Arm					32				Sword/Bricriu Docking Clamp		
OFFENSIVE & DEFENSIVE SYSTEM DATA											
Qty	Name	Fire Arc	DM	BR	Acc	ROF	Ammo	Special	MS	WC	AC
1	PDS (ranged)	Turret	x8	1	0	6	Inf	AM, HEAT	8	2850	n/a
	(shield)	FF	x20	M	0	0	Inf	Def, Eshield, HEAT	3	150	n/a
2	Laser Cannon	*	x15	5	0	2	Inf	AD1, AP, HEAT	13	9625	n/a

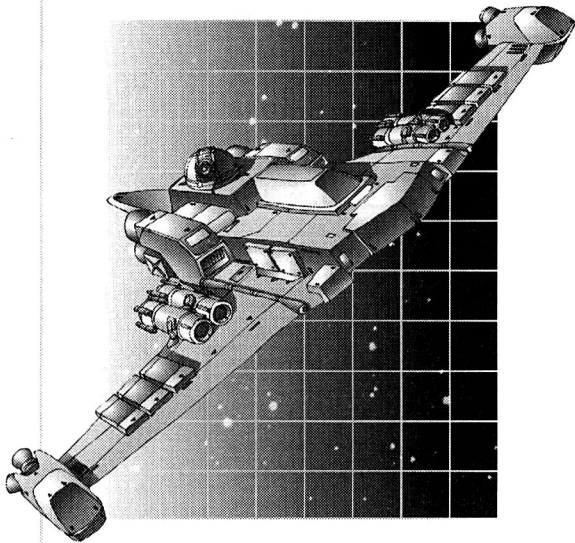
*Magsail arcs are 1 Right Side/1 Left Side; Solar sail arcs are 1 Front/1 Rear.

ROTATING HABITAT SECTION

Cost (credits)	2,000,000
Crew	3
Actions	3
Hull Size	20
Default Size	14
Stacking Size	20
Individual Lemon Dice	3
ARMOR	
Light/Heavy/Overkill	40/80/120
Movement Data	Towed by Drive Section
Deployment Range	3000 hours
Sensors	-5/2 km
Communications	-3/10 km
Fire Control	-5
PERKS & FLAWS DATA	
Name	RatingGame Effect
Backup Systems	-Communications and Life Support only
Ejection System	-Escape Pods, 40 places
HEP: Extreme Heat	-Extra radiators
HEP: Radiation	410,000 rads per hour
HEP: Vacuum	-Space protection
Life Support	-Full, for 40 crew
Crew Accommodation	-1000 m^3, 4 singles, 10 doubles
Reinforced Crew Compartment	-Ignores first Crew hit
Sick Bay	44 beds
OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE SYSTEM DATA	
None	

end of section 6.5 erel-class crvette

► AGARES CLASS FIGHTER



The Agares is a new, extremely agile single-seat interceptor, appearing less than six months ago. It has been designed specifically for conventional hangar modules, its compact frame providing technicians with much more space for performing maintenance and repairs. The Agares is currently deployed with the Transit and Belt Dispatch Fleets. So far, the fighter has performed admirably against older, poorly maintained pirate vessels, but it has yet to be tested against its modern counterparts. Depending on its performance record over the next year, the Agares may eventually replace most of Mercury's aging fighters.

The fighter's primary weapon is the Sirocco, a laser cannon coupled to a series of turreted reflectors. This provides the fighter with an offensive punch that can be aimed in almost any direction without re-orienting the ship. The reflectors are capable of withstanding a significant amount of energy, but are expensive to produce. The remaining armament consists of four anti-ship seeker missiles.

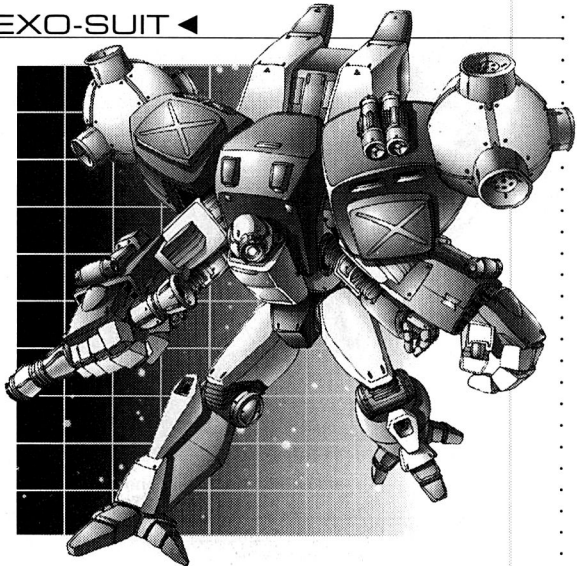
▣ PRODUCTION DATA

Threat Value						3000 (5,300,000 credits)					
Crew						1 (2 actions)					
Size						8 (17 tons)					
Armor						16/32/48					
MOVEMENT DATA											
Movement Mode				Combat Speed		Top Speed				Maneuver	
Space				17 (1.7 g)		34 (3.4 g)				0	
Deployment Range						250 hours					
Reaction Mass						350 BP					
ELECTRONICS DATA											
Sensors						0/2 km					
Communications						0/10 km					
Fire Control						0					
PERKS AND FLAWS DATA											
Name					Rating			Game Effect			
Autopilot					-			Acts as Level 1 Pilot			
Backup Systems					-			Communications, Fire Control, Life Support, Sensors			
Computer					2			CRE: 0, KNO: 0, PP: 2			
Ejection System					-			Escape Pod			
HEP: Radiation					4			10,000 rads per hour			
HEP: Vacuum					-			Space protection			
Life Support					-			Limited, 1 crew			
Reinforced Crew Compartment					-			Ignores first Crew hit			
Weapon Link					-			All missiles			
OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE SYSTEM DATA											
Qty	Name	Fire Arc	DM	BR	Acc	ROF	Ammo	Special	MS	WC	AC
1	Laser Cannon	T	15	3	+1	2	Inf.	AM,AP,HEAT	5	2775	n/a
4	MAS Mk 3 Missile	FF	20	5	-1	0	-	Missile,Seek2,SM1,SD	6	490	n/a

HELLHOUND EXO-SUIT ◀

The Hellhound is designed to be a multi-purpose worksuit for a microgravity environment. It is rather large for an exo-suit, but the extra size is necessary to accommodate the large thruster arrays that characterize Mercurian exo vehicles. The suit is powerful enough to maneuver a 30-ton mass in microgravity, although the Hellhound is sluggish in standard gravity environments.

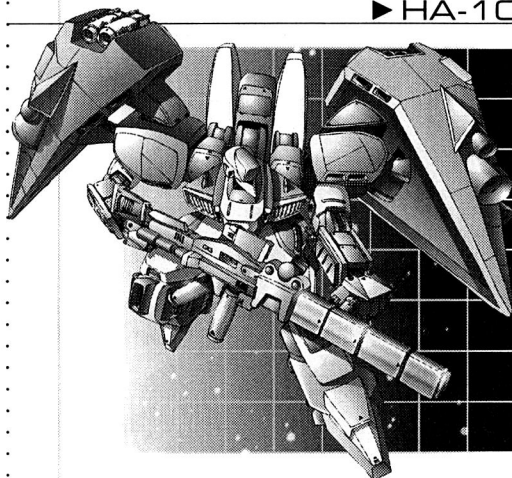
The exo-suit has been deployed primarily to military units, particularly the Guild's Security Corps. For anti-piracy duties, Hellhounds operate in squadrons of six out of freighter-mounted hangar modules. Weaponry has been designed for guerilla combat, and consists of a high-powered laser rifle firing in the deep ultraviolet range of the EM spectrum, similar to the Jovian IM-05 Intruder. Its four missiles have been designed with extremely low sensor profiles, and the Hellhound has also been observed using a plasma lance. Unarmed variations of the suit can be found in Mercurian shipyards and also aboard a few ESR rescue ships.



PRODUCTION DATA ▢

Threat Value					1200 (2,600,000 credits)						
Crew					1 (2 actions)						
Size					5						
Armor					10/20/30						
MOVEMENT DATA											
Movement Mode				Combat Speed		Top Speed			Maneuver		
Space				10 (1.0 g)		20 (2.0 g)			0		
Space (moving 30 tons)				1 (0.1 g)		2 (0.2 g)			-2		
Walker				3 (18 kph)		5 (30 kph)			-1		
Deployment Range					150 hours						
Reaction Mass					300 BPs (Hydrogen)						
Reaction Mass (moving 30t)					30 BPs (Equivalent)						
ELECTRONICS DATA											
Sensors					0/2 km						
Communications					0/10 km						
Fire Control					0						
PERKS AND FLAWS DATA											
Name					Rating			Game Effect			
Autopilot					-			Acts as Level 1 Pilot			
Backup Systems					-			Communications, Fire Control, Life Support, Sensors			
Computer					2			CRE: -2, KNO: 0, PP: 2			
Decreased Maneuver					1			Non-Agile Walker Mode			
HEP: Extreme Heat					-			Extra Heat Sinks			
HEP: Radiation					4			10,000 rads per hour			
HEP: Vacuum					-			Space protection			
Life Support					-			Limited, 1 crew			
Manipulator Arm x 2					5			Can punch			
Reinforced Crew Compartment					-			Ignores first Crew hit			
Sensor Dependent					-			Extremely restricted field of vision			
OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE SYSTEM DATA											
Qty	Name	Fire Arc	DM	BR	Acc	ROF	Ammo	Special	MS	WC	AC
1	Laser Sniper Rifle	F	x8	3	0	0	Inf	AP, HEAT, Sniper, Stealth	5	682	N/A
4	LMAS-S Missile	FF	x5	5	+1	0	-	Mis, SD, SK1, Stealth	5	203	N/A
1	Plasma Lance	F	x5	M	0	0	LU3	AC, HEAT	1	6	N/A
1*	Mass Driver Rifle	F	x5	4	0	2	15c	-	4	101	0.4

*Optional



► HA-102 BAEI EXO-ARMOR

The Bael is the product of an extensive design evaluation of the Brimstone. It is a radical departure from Mercury's previously produced exo combat assets, which were designed mainly for anti-piracy duties with the ability to perform some commercial duties such as cargo handling. While the Bael can do yard work, it is meant to be a "heavy hitter" — an exo designed to make short work of its contemporaries, and also do some serious damage to larger combat vessels. The Administration initiated the project as part of the National Navy refurbishment, but all Bael constructed to date have been deployed with Security Corps units in the Mars and Belt Dispatches. It is hoped the Bael will provide adequate convoy defense in real combat situations; however, its high maintenance requirements and the fact that it does not fit into hangar modules are hampering its initial deployment.

▣ PRODUCTION DATA

Threat Value		6400 (8,700,000 credits)									
Production Type		Early Production									
Indv. Lemon Dice		3									
Crew		1 (2 actions)									
Default Size		19									
Stacking Size		14 (82 tons)									
Armor		32/64/96									
MOVEMENT DATA											
Movement Mode		Combat Speed			Top Speed			Maneuver			
Space		17 (1.7 g)			34 (3.4 g)			0			
Walker		3 (18 k/h)			6 (36 k/h)			-1			
Deployment Range		250 hours (Fusion/electric)									
Reaction Mass		400 BP (Hydrogen)									
ELECTRONICS DATA											
Sensors		+1/2 km									
Communications		0/15 km									
Fire Control		0									
PERKS AND FLAWS DATA											
Name		Rating			Game Effect						
Autopilot		-			Acts as Level 1 Pilot						
Backup Systems		-			Communications, Fire Control, Life Support, Sensors						
Computer		2			CRE: 0, KND: 0, PP: 2						
Ejection System		-			Escape Pod						
HEAT-Resistant Armor		4			Add to Armor vs. HEAT weapons						
HEP: Radiation		4			10,000 rads per hour						
HEP: Extreme Heat, Vacuum		-			Extra Heat Sinks, Space protection						
Life Support		-			Limited, 1 crew						
2 x Manipulator Arm		14			Can Punch						
Reinforced Crew Compartment		-			Ignores first Crew hit						
Decreased Maneuver		1			Walker						
Difficult to Modify		-			Maneuver and Aux systems						
Large Sensor Profile		3			Too Large to Hide						
OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE SYSTEM DATA											
Gty	Name	Fire Arc	DM	BR	Acc	ROF	Ammo	Special	MS	WC	AC
1	Heavy Railgun*	F	27	6	-1	0	25	AP, Bstd Dmg, Snpr, CI	9	1400	840
4	Mt40 Torpedoes**	F	30	5	-2	0	-	Missile, SD, Sk1, Sm2	11	2460	n/a
2	L6A Plasma Lance	F	12	M	0	0	LU4	AC, Conc, HEAT	3	86	n/a
4	M10 Light Missile**	F	15	3	-2	0	-	Missile, SD, Sk1, Sm2	5	300	n/a
*Heavy Railgun is Clumsy, reducing Man. to -1 Space/-2 Walker. DM includes boosted damage. Sniper is +1 to hit at Long and Extreme ranges.											
**Mt40 Torpedoes remain active for 1 additional turn. See the Missile Weapon Characteristic, Rulebook page 178.											
Command/Elite variant (10% of production units) adds: LAM Defense Laser, Arc T, DM 2, BR 1, Acc +1, ROF 4, Ammo Inf., AM, Def, HEAT, MS 3, WC 189											

GLOSSARY AND COMMON PHRASES ◀

It is the nature of the Merchant's Tongue and the Mercurian dialect to constantly adopt new words and phrases. Entries specifically marked as Merchant's Tongue (MT) and Mercurian dialect (D) are recorded according to their appropriate usage for the time period of 2210 to 2213. Outside of this time frame, entries may have different meanings or not be used at all.

Abaft: Astern, to the rear.

Afore: In front.

Axis of Thrust: See Centreline.

Bell: (D) One hour. Used mainly on board ship.

Black Water Navy: A navy capable of functioning beyond the orbital control zones of its home planet.

Blue Peter: (D) The alarm sounded before a ship disengages docking clamps.

By the Head: When a freighter carries enough mass to shift its center of gravity forward.

By the Stern: The opposite of 'By the Head.'

Canard: (D) An insult.

Coxswain: Commander of an auxiliary vessel, usually based on a larger craft.

Centerline: An imaginary line drawn through a ship's center of gravity, parallel to the direction of acceleration when the engines fire. The mass of a ship must be evenly distributed around its centerline, or else ship orientation will shift in the direction of the highest mass when accelerating. Also called the Axis of Thrust.

Doledrums: The part of a space voyage between initial acceleration and braking thrust. (D) Also means boredom.

Dowse the Glim: (D) Turn off the lights.

Edicts: A system-wide set of laws established to prevent the development of potentially hazardous technology, such as nanotechnology or artificial intelligence.

Eight-eighty: 880 days, roughly the length of a Mercurian year.

Gawk: (D/MT) An Unbonded Worker on his or her first contract with the Guild.

Horse Marine: (D) A person not trained in zero gravity maneuvering.

Lee: (D) Shade or shadow. Originally a solar sailing term referring to planetary umbrae, where a sailing vessel would be out of the sun's light, and technically out of maneuvering power.

Leg Bail: (D) To leave without permission; to desert a post.

Longshore: A cargo loader. Originally "Longshoreman." Also known as a Stevedore.

Master: Guild shipboard rank, usually addressed as "Master of" a sailor's particular area of responsibility. A captain may occasionally be referred to as the "Master of the Ship."

Molto: (MT) Very.

Morendo: (MT) Verb, to fade away, usually due to lack of light or extreme distance.

Mulct: (MT) A fine, usually pay forfeited as punishment.

Nosh: (D) To eat.

The Oath: A verbal and written agreement made by every Mercurian upon becoming a full member of the Guild.

Port the Helm: (D) Surrender right of way to another vessel. Literally means "Get out of the way."

Presidio: (D) An incident shelter or bunker.

PYR: An acronym standing for pitch, yaw and roll. When course changes are presented, they are given as a series of three numbers representing in degrees the angle of change either from a ship's current course or a zero bearing. The numbers are usually separated with the words "by" or "mark," e.g., "Set course 226 by 145 by 14."

Quilting: (D) A beating; refers to the pattern of bruises.

Ray trap: Solar collector.

Signals: The Guild's shipboard communications department.

Salt Junk: Shipboard emergency rations.

Stevedore: Cargo handler. Also known as a Longshore.

Sun's Eye: (D) Navigational coordinates of the sun, which are 0 by 0 by 0. Courses are sometimes given using the sun as a zero bearing, e.g., "Come about 28 by 193 by the sun's eye."

Three-Watch: A period of 24 hours, or three 8-hour watches.

Ticket: A contract to transport cargo or passengers.

Three Sheets: (D) Intoxicated.

Tom Pepper: (D) A liar.

Top Hamper: (D) Unnecessary weight, usually refers to a poorly balanced load of cargo.

Unship (D): To remove.

Zero Bearing: A line drawn between a ship's current position and a sighted object, such as a planet, a star, or navigation beacon. This line is arbitrarily assigned a bearing of 0 by 0. All course changes are issued in degrees based on this line. (D) It may also mean the object of one's attention, desire or obsession.

1.1

end of section 7.0 glossary



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★ JOVIAN CHRONICLES



"Hello, friend. Let's get down to business. What I have you will not find anywhere else in the solar system, no matter how hard you look or how much you pay. My price, you will find, is not terribly excessive, and once you meet my meager demands, I will give you the one thing the Guild would never want you to have. I will give you the truth."

-Ex-Guild Mate Arwyn van de Ban, covert meeting on Aton Station

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